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# SELF-EXILED

A

STORY OF THE HIGH SEAS AND EAST AFRICA

BY

J. A. STEUART

AUTHOR OF "IN THE DAY OF BATTLE," "KILGROOM: A STORY OF  
IRELAND," ETC.

*WITH SIX FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS*

*BY J. SCHÖNBERG*

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION

LONDON

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TO  
J. M. RIPPON,  
IN MEMORY OF THE ADVENTURES,  
PLEASANT AND DISAGREEABLE,  
WE ONCE HAD TOGETHER.

J. H. S.





# CONTENTS.

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CHAP.	Page
I. I GO TO COLLEGE AND FALL INTO DISGRACE, . . .	9
II. I GO TO SEA, . . . . .	19
III. CHILLY LODGINGS, . . . . .	33
IV. WE ABANDON THE SHIP, . . . . .	48
V. ADRIFT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, . . . . .	60
VI. CONSPIRACY, . . . . .	71
VII. MUTINY, . . . . .	86
VIII. THE BITER BIT, . . . . .	100
IX. A CHANGE OF QUARTERS, . . . . .	114
X. A CONFIDENTIAL TALK WITH THE CAPTAIN, . . .	127
XI. THE ARAB SLAVE CAPTAIN, . . . . .	139
XII. A CHAMBER OF HORRORS, . . . . .	151
XIII. I HAVE A ROW WITH ALI KUBLA, . . . . .	163
XIV. STILL ON THE RIVER, . . . . .	177
XV. WE MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF ROYALTY, . . .	187
XVI. THE SEARCH FOR GOLD, . . . . .	204
XVII. FLIGHT, . . . . .	219
XVIII. AT THE POINT OF DEATH, . . . . .	235
XIX. A FEARFUL CALAMITY, AND WHAT IT REVEALED, . .	249
XX. A BATTLE IN WHICH WE ARE REVENGED ON OUR ENEMIES, . . . . .	262
XXI. FORTUNE, . . . . .	282



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

	Page
ADRIFT ON THE ICEBERGS, . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i> , 44
THE WORK OF THE MUTINEERS, . . . . .	92
"I HIT HIM STRAIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES," . . . . .	141
FITZROY FEELS THE DRIVER'S LASH, . . . . .	169
DICK AND I WATCHING THE ENEMY, . . . . .	221
THE SEARCH FOR GOLD REWARDED, . . . . .	258







# SELF-EXILED:

A STORY OF THE HIGH SEAS AND AFRICA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### I GO TO COLLEGE AND FALL INTO DISGRACE.

**T**HE story of my adventures begins when I arrived in Glasgow from the Highlands, on a certain evening in the early winter of '55, to attend the University. Enthusiastic and full of eager ambitions, I had made a solemn compact with myself to become distinguished; and my resolution was strengthened by a knowledge of the high hopes which were centred in me. My father—good man—had given me earnest injunctions to observe a seemly conduct, to be diligent in my studies, to pay becoming attention and respect to my teachers, and above all to shun the company of idle or dissipated students. He had likewise given me a score or so of written maxims, some of them taken from the Bible, and some from the works of favourite secular writers, which he enjoined me to read at least twice a week. My mother's presents, which were, perhaps, better appreciated, consisted of a

small pocket Bible, with my name inscribed in her own dear shaky hand on the fly leaf, a silk handkerchief, a new purse (with something in it of which my father did not know), a budget of instructions how to keep my health, and a tearful blessing. I should not omit to mention that Boyd, my faithful collie, thoroughly licked my hands and face before consenting to part with me, as if the poor brute had a foreboding that our separation was to be a lasting one. With my maxims, my blessings, a small box containing my wardrobe, and something like four pounds sterling in my purse, I reached Glasgow on a drizzling November evening in the year 1855, as above stated.

For a time all went well. I strove to be well-behaved and studious, and so far succeeded that I gained the favourable opinion of at least one professor. But I was not destined to keep it long.

In March or April (I forget which) following my matriculation the election of a new Lord Rector took place, and at this point my troubles began. A few of the more daring spirits amongst the students had for weeks before the election been making arrangements for what they called "a glorious old kick up." But though privately anxious enough to have a hand in the fun, I managed for a time to keep respectably aloof. The moth that hovers about a flame, however, is in danger of getting into it; and I was caught in this way. Bob Murray, a divinity student some years older than myself, whom I had known before entering college, was for ever urging me to join the "benders"—a roistering gang whose glory it was to be known as

the most inveterate peace-breakers in the city of Glasgow. Supported by my father's injunctions and the fresh memory of my own promise to be orderly in behaviour, I successfully withstood him for a time. But one day he changed importunity for railing, saying that he had always given me credit for some pluck, but he was sorry to find himself mistaken; and added that he couldn't in justice to himself associate any longer with one who had incurred the ridicule of the other students by his cowardice.

Now, if there is one thing more than another that touches a Highlander in his most sensitive spot, it is to have his courage called in question. Highlanders are proverbially silly on that point, and I showed no better sense than the rest of them. The reader will, therefore, not be surprised to hear that that very afternoon I accompanied Bob to the rooms of another student named Alfred Gregory, also a divinity man I am sorry to say, eager to be enrolled a member of the noble corps of "benders." After all I could discover no serious harm in what I was doing, for I was solemnly assured that nothing more than a frolic was intended. But frolics have sometimes anything but frolicsome endings, and so it proved in our case.

After the installation there was the usual torchlight procession, in which the "benders" had a prominent place. We were amply provided for the occasion, and sworn to make the most of it. Scarcely had the procession started when we gracefully opened the campaign by throwing flour on the by-standers, and sometimes thrusting our torches into their faces.

Naturally enough they resented these attentions, but the more vigorously they protested the more audacious we became. At length a policeman, more courageous than prudent, seized a student roughly by the arm and dragged him out of the procession. A sharp scrimmage ensued but no arrests were made, and the procession clamoured along. It was after the procession was over, and the more orderly students had gone home, that matters became really serious.

Bob Murray and Alfred Gregory called a council of war, at which speeches were made, and a resolution condemning the police put and unanimously carried. The excitement and enthusiasm were intense, and I was amongst the most excited of the batch.

When the speechifying was over we retired to gather all the weapons and missiles we could lay our hands on—sticks, pokers, tongs, brickbats, cobble-stones, anything and everything that could be used in the conflict before us. As soon as we were all together again we got into military formation, and marched down the street singing snatches from the most stirring and popular ditties of the day. We had assembled at a comparatively quiet place where we were not at all expected, and where we were not likely to be immediately molested. A few minutes after we started, a single policeman, who chanced to be going leisurely along in the same direction as ourselves, hearing us and seeing us coming up behind, prudently quickened his pace to get out of the way. Seeing this we raised a tremendous whoop, and calling on him to take it easy and be dissected, broke into a good round trot. At this the policeman also broke into a run and

blew his whistle. His call for assistance speedily brought a dozen others. We knew we were in for it now and charged straight at them, hurling them to the ground, trampling on them, and in many cases wresting their weapons from them. The few who were not sprawling amongst our feet in the mud made off, each man sticking his whistle in his mouth and blowing like fury. Flushed to a senseless confidence by our little victory we gave chase, shouting and flourishing the batons we had captured. We could not catch them, however. It must be true that fear makes fleet feet, for I never saw men make better time in my life. Finding we could not overtake them we stopped and formed into solid ranks again. Scarcely had we done so when they returned with reinforcements, coming at us with a ferocious run. By a swift manœuvre our front ranks opened to receive them, then instantly closed again hemming them in. And now the fight began in earnest. The police, goaded almost to frenzy, laid about them with the fury of madmen. For a while it seemed as if they were going to have the best of it, for we could not help recoiling a little under their merciless mauling. Finding the advantage with them they ceased to press so hard, and attempted to handcuff some of our number. At sight of this our whole body rallied and bore in upon them, jamming them so tightly that they could neither use their handcuffs nor their weapons. At this point the proceedings took an unexpected turn—a turn which, though it gained us a temporary triumph, was ultimately of little benefit to us. A crowd of roughs, who had a chronic grudge against



the law, taking courage from our success, sprang into the struggling mass and began to wreak their long-cherished vengeance on the hapless police. In the *melée* that followed I was knocked on the head, whether by a policeman, a rough, or a student I never could tell, and fell to the ground stunned. The fighting mass must have trampled on me in its swayings to and fro, for when my senses returned I was horribly bruised all over, and my clothes were rent and muddy as if trodden upon by the feet of half a city. Looking up hazy and bewildered I saw the crowd rushing away from me. Suddenly the whole situation flashed upon me, and I concluded that our side was beaten. But scrambling to my feet I saw that this was not the case. In front with necks craned, heels in the air, and coat-tails streaming on the wind, I saw the police making off for their lives, with the students and roughs like a pack of beagles in pursuit. The spectacle was at once so ridiculous and so inspiring, that, bruised and aching as I was, I could not help laughing and cheering lustily.

"Bravo! Well done, boys!" I shouted, starting after them to be in at the death, so to speak.

I hobbled along as fast as my maimed condition would permit me, giving vent to my exultation from time to time in very eager but rather husky shouts, when suddenly I was arrested by a gruff voice at my side.

"I'll bravo ye!" it said as its owner clutched me savagely by the collar of the coat. "I'll make ye sing bravo on the other side of your face, you young ruffian!" and the iron grasp slipped from my coat to my throat.

As he spoke the last words I felt additional hands on me, and knew he had got assistance. I fought with my two assailants with all my might, and presently, more by good luck than superior strength, managed to knock one of them down. But the next instant the baton of the other came down on my head, and I can remember nothing further until I found myself dazedly trying to review the evening's work in the cold solitude of a prison cell.

It is useless trying to describe my feelings on that miserable night. I have been in many a strange situation since, often as it were taking death by the beard and smiting him in the face, but I never suffered half so much in my mind as I did then. I had disgraced myself, I had disgraced my family. If the news of my incarceration should ever reach the Highlands, it would kill my father and mother. In an agony of heart and soul I threw myself on the stone floor and gave way to tears. If this did not ease me it exhausted me, and somehow or other, in a half stupor I think, I passed the time till morning.

At ten o'clock I was taken before a bench of bailies with many others who had been subsequently arrested, but neither Bob Murray nor Alfred Gregory was of the number. My appearance was disreputable enough, with hair dishevelled and clotted with blood, face a series of red, white, and blue patches as if an amateur artist had just been testing his colours on me, and clothes that a beggar would be ashamed of. I felt that the testimony of my own person was sufficient evidence against me. And it did not incline the heart of the

presiding bailie to mercy that my fellow-students and the roughs had wrecked his house.

"You young ruffian, you ought to be whipped at the tail of the cart," were his first words to me. "What is your name?"

"Kenneth Cameron, sir," I answered meekly.

"Kenneth Cameron!" he repeated fiercely, his face purple and his eyes emitting sparks of fire. "Kenneth Cameron! A Hieland cateran, I'll be bound! A robber, a thief, and a house-breaker like your bare-legged, kye-liftin' forbears."

Though perfectly conscious of the folly and danger of replying, I could not passively listen to this causeless abuse of my family.

"My forbears have all been honest men," I answered indignantly—"not a thief, nor a robber, nor a house-breaker among them."

"How dare you address me in that insolent tone, sir?" thundered the bailie. "Honest men, indeed! Ye look as if ye came of a stock of honest men. I'se warrant there's a bit of hemp snugly laid away for you somewhere; house-breaking and thieveries and Hieland pliskies all end there. Honest men! I'm thinking the veins of the honest men must have been nourishing blackguardism for some centuries to come to a top in you."

"The man who says that a single drop of impure blood flowed in the veins of my ancestors," I roared, almost beside myself with rage, "tells a foul lie; and I don't care who or what he is."

To my surprise this seemed to quiet the bailie.

Very deliberately taking off his spectacles, he wiped them with a big red handkerchief, put them on again, turning them up over his bald head, and looked steadily at me for an instant.

"You're a young man of great promise with the tongue," he said slowly. Then sitting up with an assumption of judicial dignity, he ordered the witnesses to be brought forward.

The process of incrimination was not long, but it was wonderfully complete, and I shuddered at the blackness of my own guilt.

When I was proved hopelessly guilty, the bailie asked me if I had anything to say for myself; and upon my answering in the negative, he said:

"You are sentenced to a week for insolence, ten days for rioting, obstructing the police, and destroying property; all without the option of a fine, for there's no saying how ye might come by the money to pay it. And every remark ye make to the bench after this will cost ye just a week's hard labour on bread and water. We reward folks on their merits here; and to tell the truth, man, I think so much of your talents, that if I had the thing in my own hands I'd give you a government post for life." Then turning to a couple of policemen he said in a high and authoritative tone, "Remove the prisoner." And I was bundled off below.

I cannot tell how I got through those wretched seventeen days. They were days of shame and indignation, the bare recollection of which yet makes my pulses throb and my flesh creep. When I was released

I had not the face to return to college nor to go home; so after getting my box looked after and my lodgings paid, I wandered down to the Broomielaw to see whether I could not escape from my miseries by shipping for foreign parts.







## CHAPTER II.

### I GO TO SEA.

I WANDERED about the quays for hours searching for a vessel on which I might be able to work my passage somewhere abroad—I did not care where. In and out among a bewildering variety of craft and men I threaded my way, sometimes in my confusion of thoughts forgetting my purpose altogether, then suddenly recalling myself as, perhaps, I fell over a cable, or stumbled against somebody who roused me with an oath. I remember, however, that even then I could not help admiring the forest of graceful masts with their gauzy network of ropes shimmering in the sun, though my head felt dizzy and I trembled at the mere thought of being aloft there in a gale. I little knew how glad people often are to get aloft there in gales. When I ventured to inquire of the numerous sailors I met whether they could direct me to any ship on which I might find employment, they invariably made sport of me. Some of them advised me to toddle back to my mother, others asked me in a confidential tone if I could tell them what lunatic asylum I had escaped from, while others gravely inquired if I had ever seen

the ocean, or knew it was made of water and would drown me. I bore these gibes as well as I could, for I knew it was useless to retaliate. I felt them none the less keenly, however, that I held my peace. Jack is always hard on a landsman, though when you get to know him his heart is as tender as your mother's. Some of my best friends to-day are sailors, and if anybody will help you in a life-and-death pinch be sure it is Jack.

How many hours I continued that forlorn search I know not. I was at it long enough to make me imagine myself weak with hunger (though I came afterwards to know I was scarcely hungry at all), and going to a sailors' refreshment room on the quay I had a cup of bad coffee and a stale bun, for which I paid threepence. When I came out night was falling, and seeing it was useless to continue my search any longer, I made my way back to an American liner I had seen, and laid out nearly all the money I had on a steerage passage to New York. Great changes have taken place in steamships since then. The *Glenlivet* was very different from the magnificent floating palaces, as they are called, that now cross the Atlantic; but if even now the steerage is not a delectable place, what then must it have been over thirty years ago, with half the present accommodation and no ventilation at all? However, it was better than a fruitless search on cold quays, and I lay down and slept, though I had no bedding but the bare boards.

We sailed about eight o'clock that evening. I got up for a little to see the passengers take leave of their

friends, a sight which, to one in my plight, was far from exhilarating. But I was too dead weary to bother my head long about other people's grief, so, soon after sailing, I lay down again and almost immediately fell into a deep sleep. When I awoke we were off the Irish coast, and the vessel was dipping a bit by the bows. Already many of my companions were seeking the privacy which is usually so much in request at the beginning of a voyage. To relieve sufferers of the restraint of my presence I went on deck, and leaning over the bulwarks looked at the Giant's Causeway, which we were just then passing. Scarcely had I taken up this position when a cheery voice at my side exclaimed:

"Not sick, eh? Well, now, that's not bad for a landsman;" and glancing round I discovered one of the most fantastic creatures I ever set eyes on. He was a short man, very short, and so sparsely built you could not help feeling that, like the old Greek poet, he would have been the better of weights in his boots to keep him from being blown away. There was something in his appearance at once so apingly aristocratic and so rakish that it was with difficulty I managed to restrain myself from laughing in his face. He sported long Dundreary whiskers, and on his head (which was scarcely larger than a hen's) was a tiny felt hat jauntily cocked over his right eye, as a drunken soldier might wear his turban. His figure was wrapped in a frayed morning coat several sizes too small for him, slender as he was, buttoned very tightly over trousers several sizes too large, very baggy about the knees, and terminating in

fringes something like the coloured paper you find in country grates when the fire has been extinguished for the season. I afterwards learned that he had deliberately cut them up like that for novel effect, because he couldn't afford a new pair. Round his neck were shreds of a silk handkerchief ingeniously twisted into the similitude of a scarf; under his arm was a dainty cane with a glittering tin head, and in his mouth a cigarette.

"Ah, by Jove," he said with a smile, while he slowly emitted a puff of smoke through his nostrils, "I'm glad to see there's somebody besides myself with a sensible liver on board. Did you ever see such a lubberly set? Mind trying one of my little beauties?" holding out a package of cigarettes. When I had helped myself his hand suddenly dived into his pocket and he brought out a piece of crumpled leather. He looked between its folds with a comic air of disappointment.

"This bit of old leather is his card-case, I suppose," I said to myself, and my conjecture proved right.

"I am unfortunately unable to exchange cards with you," he said with an elaborate bow; "I find mine are done, and I stupidly omitted to get a fresh supply before coming on board; but I usually sign myself W. Chadwick Fitzroy. I have heard myself jocularly dubbed by familiars 'Billy Fitz.'"

"My name is Kenneth Cameron," I said, seeing he was fishing for that information.

"Ah, by Jove, from 'Lochaber no more,' or, perhaps,

‘Lochiel, Lochiel, beware of the day.’ My dear sir, I hope I am not giving offence.”

I assured him he was not; indeed he might have seen that I was on the point of exploding with laughter.

“Going to America, I presume,” he said next.

“Yes, if the ship gets there I hope to get there too.”

“Ah, my dear sir,” replied Mr. Fitzroy daintily knocking the ashes from his cigarette and looking up with a smile, “your words give food for deep reflection. It’s just possible the ship may never get there. ‘They that go down to the sea in ships,’ you know the rest. Just look at that water, five miles, straight as the plummet can go, and think of it in a storm—think of it in a storm, sir; why, bless my soul, where would a ship be then?”

The thought was serious enough, but Mr. Fitzroy’s countenance was too much for me, and I burst out laughing. Mr. Fitzroy joined heartily, though from what cause I could not discover, if it were not from pure politeness. After that we got on so comfortable a footing that by degrees we grew confidential. I gave him as much of my history as I thought prudent; then he gave me some of his.

“I shall never forget my first arrival in America,” said Mr. Fitzroy. “I was sick of cities, so I struck out west. First night I slept under a bridge, second in a swell farmer’s house, third with a Red Indian, who introduced me to company I needn’t name and didn’t like, so I took to hunting.”

“Hunting!” I repeated; I suppose more eagerly

than I was aware of, for his eyes brightened. "Then you must have had some adventures."

"Lots," he answered briskly. "I was within an ace of making supper for a grizzly once."

"How did that come about?" said I.

"Well," said he, "I was out with a hunting party in the Rockies, and one day I happened to get separated from my companions. I apprehended no danger, however, and was making my way leisurely among the rocks and scrubby timber; by Jove, I believe I was thinking how delightful it would be to have some plum-pudding—funny thought in such a place, wasn't it? After a little I struck what had the appearance of an abandoned trail, but was in reality a natural opening—you find lots of these openings in the Rockies. I took it as being an easy way out, and in turning an abrupt corner I suddenly confronted a big grizzly. You see here a curious coincidence, for the bear and I must have been thinking of dining at the same time. Well, sir, bruin was no less astonished than I. I believe he had never seen a man before. We stood and gazed and gazed into each others' eyes—a bear has dashed fine eyes—large, soft, and dreamy, not at all bloodthirsty, as you might expect. After a little he squatted on his haunches and cocked his head to one side as if he were lost in admiration of my person, and I leaned against a tree. Well, sir, we gazed and gazed, and the more the bear gazed the more he cocked his head to the side in admiration, and I could not help admiring him too."

"Were you armed?" I asked.



"I had a rifle with one charge in it."

"Why didn't you let him have it, then?"

Mr. Fitzroy smiled in a superior way.

"Ah, the usual impulsiveness of those who don't know anything about hunting," he said. "My dear sir, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a single charge is to a bear but the challenge to battle. Presently he ceased cocking his head, rose on his hind-legs and came stumping forward to embrace me."

"Didn't you run?" I asked.

"I stepped backward two paces," said Mr. Fitzroy calmly. "When Ephraim saw this he growled and opened his jaws—which, by the way, are like the finest ivory—but the time for action had not come yet."

"How did the thing end?" I asked, for I was getting impatient with his slow recital. Instead of answering me he fell into a fit of laughter, holding his sides and shaking his head as if he had taken leave of his senses.

"Well, sir, he came waddling on—upon my honour I couldn't help laughing at him, he was so absurd and clumsy—snorting a good bit, and growling, I suppose to keep up his courage, though a bear's no coward. At last I could feel his hot breath on my face, and see the big veins in his tongue as it rolled about. 'Now's the time!' I said to myself."

"Yes."

"I thought I detected an ironical triumphant expression in his countenance, then he insolently shot out his tongue, so I ran the muzzle of my gun into his mouth and fired."



"Did you kill him?"

"He turned a complete somersault and expired."

"A lucky escape," I said.

"The American press got a hold of the incident—for it was nothing more—and attributed my escape to marvellous presence of mind."

Although I suspected he was either deliberately lying or grossly exaggerating, I was so much amused by his whimsicalities that I asked him what animals he hunted principally.

"Bear and wolf," he answered.

"You must have had other adventures, then," I said.

"Lots; more than I could tell you of in a month. I was captured by the Indians once."

"Indeed! That must have been interesting."

"Extremely. I have been asked to lecture on my experiences. Had I consented I should have given that pre-eminence."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. A man isn't a Red Indian for six months without learning something."

"I should think not," I said encouragingly.

"I should think not, sir. By Jove! you're a man of discernment. I flatter myself that I am better acquainted with Indian life and character than any other man living to-day. The ignorance some people show on this subject is positively aggravating. Why, sir, I have been as mad as blazes to read the confounded nonsense some people write about it. But talking of hunting,—when I was with the Indians we hunted bison almost daily, and I must acknowledge the sport

is very exciting. I had one remarkable adventure. But I'm afraid I'm wearying you."

"I saw that all he wanted was a little flattery, so I gave him some.

"Well, then, if I weary you just tell me to stop; don't hesitate, because I have often been told to shut up: but to our hunting. It was the annual festival, and there was a grand gathering of chiefs, all in feathers and paint and bows and arrows; you never saw the like of it. Well, sir, out we started on our Indian ponies, and ere long sighted a magnificent herd of buffaloes dodging leisurely northwards. We made a quick detour round a little ridge to intercept them. As soon as they saw us they started off across country, but our ponies being swift and trained hunters we rapidly closed on them. We came on them in the flank and gave them a volley of arrows. The result was splendid. Several great brutes toppled over to career no more. While I was looking at them kicking up their heels and rolling over and over in vain attempts to rise, I suddenly heard a horrible bellow at my side, and turning saw a big bull come at me full tilt. Unfortunately in wheeling my pony stumbled, and before he could recover himself the bison was upon us. First he drove one stubby horn right to my pony's heart,—you wouldn't think it could reach so far, but it did; then he tossed me about fifty feet in the air. When I came down I found myself bestriding his back just behind the hump, which looked marvelously like the pommel of a saddle. Mr. Bison did his best to throw me by kicking up his heels and standing on

his head; but it was no go. I clasped my knees to his side, held firmly by the hump, and stuck there like a bur. Finding his tactics useless, he turned tail and started over the prairie like the wind. The Indians came after us, but we distanced them in no time. When we were five minutes out I looked back and saw them bobbing up and down like little insects. Our speed was terrific, and as for the bellowing of my steed, it was like the roaring of an earthquake. Well, sir, on we sped, like Mazeppa and his desert-born steed, tearing and splashing through quagmires and sage brush, and sometimes nearly going on our heads in gopher holes, but always keeping on, on. I wasn't exactly enjoying myself, but neither was I so uncomfortable as you might imagine, for a bison is not hard to ride though his back and gait seem awkward. But presently I began to realize that I was being carried into regions where my life wouldn't be worth a sixpence. I had lost all my arms except a revolver which I always carried in my belt. I could not kill him with that unless I got at some vital spot, for you might as well fire into a bag of wool as into the head of a buffalo. I could, of course, jump off and make my way back on foot; but I didn't want to tramp so far, besides being loath to lose my game. A bright idea occurred to me. Whipping out my knife, I began to cut away the hair from the back of his head to render him vulnerable. That accomplished, I was about to put a ball into him when it struck me it would be a terrible distance to carry his carcass back to camp. I therefore lashed him over the eyes with the buckle

of my belt and succeeded in turning him, and back we careered the way we had come. We soon overtook the Indians, who were returning, having given me up for lost. When they saw us they made ready to shoot, but I signalled them to forbear and come along with us. You see, in the excitement they might have put an arrow into me instead of into the buffalo. They started as I told them, but they might as well have tried to keep up with an express train. In a few minutes I was losing sight of them again, and in a few minutes more I sighted the camp. The squaws, as women always will, you know, came out screaming and gesticulating, thinking the devil had turned to a buffalo, and had got me on his back. When I was within a hundred yards of the nearest tent I put my weapon to the back of his head, fired the six chambers, and leaped from his back."

He stopped as if to see what effect this heroic termination had on me.

"What then?" I asked.

"Well, sir, said Mr. Fitzroy complacently, "he stood on his head a moment, shook his tail as if waving a good-bye, then rolled over and expired."

"A most extraordinary adventure," I said.

"Oh! that's only one out of many," said Mr. Fitzroy. "I could keep you going for a whole month."

"Did any sport usually follow those big hunts?" I asked.

"After that one we had three days' feasting and whooping and drinking of fire-water; then the strange chiefs went home and got ready to fight us."

"To fight you? That was a strange return for hospitality."

"Indian etiquette," replied Mr. Fitzroy; "but we were ready for them. After that famous bison ride I was made commander-in-chief of the tribe's forces—the only white man who ever held that exalted post—soon got the troops into good shape, went out to meet the enemy, licked them to sticks, scalped seventeen of their best men, returned in triumph and had a grand celebration. They wanted me to marry the chief's daughter, but as she wasn't a comely maiden I declined; Gad, man! I wouldn't have kissed her for the world. Nothing gives such umbrage as a refusal to marry a chief's daughter, so, fearing treachery, I made the sentinels drunk one night and skipped."

All through these extraordinary recitals he had maintained an air of the most sterling veracity. If he had been reading the Bible he couldn't have had a more truthful aspect.

"Of course you have travelled a lot," I said.

"Yes; I may claim," he said, "to be an amphibious animal—living sometimes on land and sometimes on water. But come," he said, suddenly changing the topic, "let's go and have a yarn with the sailors. They're entertaining fellows, because they lie well. I have no turn that way myself, and admire it, perhaps, more on that account in others;" and with that we went forward to the forecastle.

He knew many of the sailors by name, probably from meeting them ashore, and introduced me to each of his acquaintances separately as a gentleman of

means whom a spirit of adventure was forcing out into the world. Probably no spot on earth is so full of good stories as the forecastle; and that of the *Glenlivet* was no exception to the rule. In a little I was listening with mouth and eyes as well as with ears. Not one to whom I was introduced but had made the circuit of the globe, some of them several times, and their tales of hairbreadth escapes and strange peoples were more fascinating than anything I had ever read. One man was particularly voluble. His adventures had been chiefly in the East, and partook copiously of that element of the marvellous which is the peculiar possession of the Orient. Eight times had he been shipwrecked, with almost incredible escapes from death each time. He had listened to Indian princesses in gorgeous raiment, ablaze with jewels, murmuring Haidée-like over him when he returned to consciousness on the beach; had hunted with the great Mogul in the jungles of Bengal; had dined at the tables of Nabobs; had prayed with Brahmins in temples of pure gold and mother-of-pearl, and then secretly slipped an image into his pocket at parting as a memento; had sailed for weeks together in luxurious barges, to which that of Cleopatra was but a fisherman's punt, on resplendent Indian seas, with nothing to do but watch the dolphins sport in the sleeping waters and the albatross lazily skim their glistening surface, and take his grog out of cups of gold and his food off plates of silver; had lived in those favoured southern isles which seem to be still a reminiscence of Eden, inasmuch as clothes are mere ornamental superfluities, and food can

be obtained by merely stretching out the hand to take it. The second in volubility believed he had seen the north pole at a distance, a huge column ten thousand times as large as Cleopatra's Needle. He would have reached it, too, but that his comrades perished in the snow and he couldn't go alone. This man had a descriptive power which I wish I could introduce into this narrative. Whales and walruses and Esquimaux, the crimson of the midnight sun, the splendours of the aurora borealis, the huts of ice mortared with snow and the blood of polar bears, the feasts of blubber and the ghastliness of slow starvation, all stood vividly before one at his magic word.

Thus the day passed. When I lay down at night it was only to have jumbled visions of Indian seas and polar snows and bears and buffaloes and angry bailies; and in the centre of each picture was the fantastic little man whose acquaintance I had made in the morning.







## CHAPTER III.

### CHILLY LODGINGS.

**T**HE sailing for the next ten days or so was among the pleasantest I ever had on shipboard. The sun came out brightly and warmly every day, the sea lay like a sylvan lake, and officers and men were in the pink of spirits. We were congratulating ourselves upon our swift and pleasant voyage, and already the more enterprising amongst us were busy getting up bets as to the precise day on which we should sight land. But we were hallooing before we were out of the wood. Almost with our first speculations about the date of landing the fogs came slowly sifting down, at first contracting our horizon and dimming the long glistening perspective of water, then overspreading the whole expanse above till the sun went out for us, and the ship's reckoning became a daily conundrum. For forty-eight hours we continued thus with a heavy fog above and a rippleless sea beneath, but on the third day a breeze sprang up, driving away the fog and disclosing a sunless lowering sky. Then the still waters began to curl into waves, not large, yet somehow inexpressibly ugly and sullen, with white crests that broke and flew

like snow before the wind. This was noticeable early in the morning, and by noon the ship had a lively bounce. But, as the captain said he would rather have a stiff breeze, or for that matter a gale, than the fog, we had no apprehensions. Yet it was not assuring to find the steady breeze break into flaws, which presently brought chopping cross seas, in which the vessel heaved and lurched like a drunken thing. Towards evening the wind suddenly shifted from W.S.W. to N.E., and came at once in terrific squalls with pelting hail. All evening, all night it continued thus, the seas getting ever higher and higher, and the ship more uncertain in her gait. Sometimes when an unusually heavy sea struck her she would tremble to the keel, then spring forward, then stop as the next wave leaped upon her, or hit her amidships as it were knocking the wind out of her. She was a staunch sailer, however, and fought bravely. It made one hold one's breath to see her all alone in that whirling waste rise to grapple with the waves, then plunge an undistinguishable mass of spray into a great gulf, then climb again to a dizzy crest, and again plunge and again rise, continuing the battle through league upon league of tempestuous waters.

At two o'clock on the afternoon of the next day a squall of extraordinary violence struck us, carrying away the main-topmast close to the cap. After that the squalls seemed to come from every quarter at once. The crew were scarce at work clearing away when another from the south-west struck us, driving our lee scuppers under and sweeping us from stem to

stern. At the same time hailstones, as large and hard as nutmegs, as the men said, lashed the blood from hands and faces. Then for an instant the tempest lulled, but it was only to gain fresh force. Suddenly an enormous wave was noticed bearing down on our starboard bow; the next instant another monster came careering from the port side. In the shock of meeting they leaped into the air, higher by many feet than the lower yards of the foremast, then unitedly descended upon the deck with a boom like the explosion of a magazine, crashing in the four-inch pine planks and their iron stanchions as if they had been pasteboard and bamboo cane. Then the whole mass of water swept along the gangways of the main-deck, carrying several seamen with it. At that moment there mingled with the roar of the hurricane such an united cry of agony as I hope never to hear again. As I write of it I think I hear it, as well as the mocking yell of the tempest, when it hurled the poor fellows to the waters without, and crushed others to death beneath the debris of wood and iron in the ship. The ship herself seemed paralysed like a living thing that had been struck senseless by a blow from a superior antagonist. How it was that we did not go down there and then is a mystery to me yet, nor is it less a mystery to me how I managed to keep so calm in the confusion and uproar about me. Doubtless my calmness was partially owing to stupefaction. I remember that I had the idea of the ocean opening to swallow us, so terrific beyond the wildest imagination was the foaming gulf in which we tossed. Yet I was

not afraid. If anything I was curious, and for a little speculated with the utmost composure as to the rate at which we should go down when the waters had closed above us. I believe I had a foolish dream of being welcomed by mermaids, then of being swallowed by a whale like Jonah. I do not think the idea of drowning once occurred to me. Certainly it did not occur to me as a painful ordeal to be struggled against and avoided.

In a few moments, however, the gallant vessel rallied and bore up directly in the teeth of the tempest. The sight gave me the idea of a dreadful hand-to-hand conflict. The infuriated elements seemed determined on her destruction. Fore and aft, on port and starboard, they beat and battered her. Now she was buried beneath a whirling mountain of foam, now sprawling on her beam ends, now wildly rearing to climb a sheer precipice, then groaning and wrenching as she was hurled back and again engulfed. All the while the waves were making clean breaches over us.

Suddenly in the midst of all this there was a tremendous crash which made the vessel reel and stagger; then a succession of blows as if something were beating the bottom out of her. I could not make out what had happened, but imagined, rather confusedly, that the crisis had come at last, and that it was all up with us. I bawled a question at a sailor who was reeling past me. "Shaft broke; hole in bottom," he bawled back; and almost immediately the engines stopped.

The carpenters managed to repair the damage so as

to keep out the flood; but the hapless passengers, already nearly frantic with fear, broke into a panic. They rushed hither and thither, entreating, shrieking, wringing their hands, and in every way showing absolute distraction. Strong men wept, profane men prayed. The black night was falling too, and in the awful tumult of frenzied people, crashing timbers, lashing seas, and roaring tempest, there was a scene which my poor pen cannot describe.

When the first accident occurred I was standing amidships, and had mechanically laid hold of an iron stanchion. In this place and position I was a butt for all the passengers to dash against. I am sure the toughest beef-steak never got half the pounding I got there. Once a man was hurled head-foremost into my stomach.

"Oh, oh!" I heard him exclaim as he fell back with the reeling of the vessel, and I knew the voice was Fitzroy's. In an instant he came tumbling along again and I caught him. He must have imagined I was some demon from the nether deeps, for he screamed and tried to make off. Jerking him violently back and lashing him to the stanchion with my arms, I put my mouth to his ear and asked him whither he was bound.

He recognized me.

"My dear sir," he piped at the pitch of his voice, "here's a pickle. It's all up with us; better pray and jump overboard."

"Silence, you blasphemous wretch, or I'll brain you," I shouted; for his affected levity angered me,

though the poor man was only trying to hide his fear by it.

"Oh, my dear sir, this is terrible," he groaned, as a cross sea first knocked our heads together then nearly tore our arms from their sockets. "She can't live; she can't possibly. Oh my, oh my! whatever made us come on board this ship?"

As our situation was not favourable to conversation I did not reply, and he said no more.

Fortunately for us the squalls ceased, the wind swung round to the original quarter, s.w., and though it was still blowing a hurricane it blew steadily. We could not bring the ship to, and were forced to let her scud under bare poles. It was useless to think of trying to manage her, for a disabled steamer is the most unmanageable vessel afloat, and she took whatever course the tempest chose to give her.

"Anybody killed forward?" I roared in Fitzroy's ear again.

"Nearly a dozen," he roared back.

Presently I left him to shift for myself, and managed to stagger forward. But there the groans and screams issuing from the darkness were too harrowing, and I turned away sick and giddy, and, somehow or other, I cannot tell how, clambered up on a narrow strip of the forward deck which had resisted the cataract.

We were tearing through the foam (no water was visible) with frightful velocity. The seas were coming clean over me, but as I was already soaking I didn't mind that. Sometimes I was blinded, sometimes



choked, and it was only by a sort of desperate death-grip that I managed to hold on to the bulwark. Our course was N.N.E., and it was bitterly cold.

Once as we gasped for breath on the verge of a sheer precipice I fancied I saw some big object loom up on our starboard quarter. But just as I caught sight of it we made the plunge, and before we rose again it had disappeared. It was too large for a ship, and I thought we were among islands or driving on some rocky coast of which this was an advance headland, and that we had been spared in the open sea only to perish more cruelly among breakers. While these thoughts were still agitating me—for I had recovered from my apathy and stupefaction—the moon gleamed momentarily from a rift, revealing another object on the port side which shimmered brilliantly like an enormous emerald. In size it must have been nearly ten times as large as the largest castle I had ever seen, and—what sent an eerie thrill through me—it was swinging slowly and heavily from side to side. The next instant the moon was overcast and the strange thing vanished. But I had no difficulty now in deciding what it was, and I grew cold with fear. Whatever hope of being saved possessed me up to that moment was annihilated then. The night was so dark that I could not see six yards ahead, and the *Glenlivet*, like those on board of her, seemed to be stricken mad with panic. It would be vain for me to attempt to give any description of her behaviour. Utterly at the mercy of the elements she capered among the boiling vortices like a maniacal thing dis-



porting with the instrument that was to destroy it. Sometimes she would shoot like an arrow, then stop, quivering and careening, as a huge mountain of water caught her and hurled her back, then sink, and again shoot, and again stagger and careen, ever getting more and more delirious in her dizzy dance with the elements. Suddenly in the midst of her reeling the sea opened; she sank, the waters surged over her, and wresting me from the bulwark swept me dizzily aft, then a counter wave caught me and hurled me back to my former position. The vessel rose dripping from the chasm to the top of a curling ridge, paused for a second as if to gauge the spring that would carry her to the next crest, then leaped. The next moment she struck something and recoiled, and I was shot head-foremost clean over the bulwark.

My recollection of what immediately followed is naturally not very clear. I must have had a considerable interval of unconsciousness, an interval which might have stretched to an eternity but for the abundance of cold water that pelted my face. When at length my scattered wits began slowly to recover themselves, I found myself at first unable to make out where I was or what had happened. Of the fact that something serious had happened I was, indeed, quite assured, both by the threshed-out feeling of my body—which was one big poignant pain—and the strange confusion of my mind; but of the nature of that something I could form no idea whatever. Gradually it came to me that I was on shipboard. But the next instant I marvelled why the ship, which but a moment

before had been in a deadly grapple with the elements, was so nearly still, and the little motion it had so mysteriously steady and slow. Was it swinging at anchor on the gentle, lazy swell of some protected bay or harbour? If so, how did it gain the haven?

Instinctively I began to feel about me, and my hand encountered a hard and gritty surface so unfamiliar that it startled me into greater bewilderment. Further investigation proved the surface to be glassy in parts and icy everywhere; and time and consideration of the discovery bringing clearer perception, I understood that the slow heaving of the object on which I lay was not the heaving of the ship. In the same instant, with a swift terror that pierced my soul like an arrow, the dread reality of the situation flashed upon me. I was adrift on an iceberg.

I staggered blindly to my feet and tried to call out, but my voice failed me as it fails the dreamer in the worst agonies of a nightmare. Again I tried, putting all the desperate energy of a doomed man into the effort, and only succeeded in making a noise like the croaking of a raven. Baffled and dismayed, I stood with bated breath and pulseless heart and listened. There was no sound but the bellowing of the tempest and the sinister roar of lashing seas. No sign of ship nor of help. The *Glenlivet* had either gone down or passed on; and I was lost. The remorse, the fear, the despair that seized on me in that terrible moment can be appreciated only by such as have been in a similar plight. Scientific investigators tell us that, as a rule, it is not painful to die. Perhaps not. The learned ease

and unruffled light-heartedness with which those gentlemen discourse of the mysteries of dissolution would, indeed, lend colour to the theory that the transition from this world to the next is hardly more disagreeable than the changing of one's clothes in a chilly atmosphere—certainly not to be half so much dreaded as a cold bath in mid-winter. I have only to say that if the impression they convey be correct there is a mighty difference between death and the fear of it. I have never been dead, and am consequently in no position to speak of the sensations of dying; but I have been face to face with death, and know the mortal pangs and terrors of the situation. In the present instance they were too strong, and once more nature was forced to give way.

It was still dark and blowing furiously when I again found myself conscious. This time I made no attempt to stir. Help had fled and hope was dead, and black despair had come to keep me company. Through the long dismal hours of the raging night I crouched on the drifting floe, with thickening blood and stiffening joints, now contemplating the fate that must be fast approaching, now quivering with an excruciating sense of lost opportunities. It was maddening to think of perishing helpless and miserable there, in the midst of the merciless Atlantic, like a polar bear cut adrift from its fellows. I reflected on the high hopes and proud ambitions with which I had started forth to conquer the world, on all that was expected of me, and all that ordinary prudence and application might have made possible, then on my monumental ruin—a ruin that

would be a word of shame to my friends for ever; and the thought was like an electric wire in my marrow. I was shivering with cold and burning with heat in the same instant; and, sore as was the pain of my body, the pain of my mind was worse. At length cold and weakness overcame me, and I dropped off to sleep.

I awoke surprised to find myself still alive. The sun was high in the heavens and the storm had greatly abated, though the waves were still stupendous. The warmth of the sun, for it was shining brilliantly, brought animation and a desire to stir, but the effort to rise cost me much time and many groans, for my joints were stiff as weather-beaten leather. At last I stood on my feet, very shaky like one affected with the palsy, and looked out on the tumultuous watery desert. I was not on the top of the berg, but on a ledge in the face of it, some eight or ten feet above the waves. Directly behind where I had lain all night a huge fissure, almost resembling a mountain gully, ran up and across the berg. It opened like the mouth of a valley where I stood, getting shallower and narrower as it ascended, till at the highest point within view I thought I could scale the side. Tottering thither, I began to crawl painfully up this icy ravine, and after much stumbling and slipping and falling at length managed to gain the ridge, whence, after a momentary rest, I pulled myself on to the level surface of the floe. I was too much exhausted to stand up, but even sitting my view took in a radius of many miles. Some half dozen bergs were visible, and the nearest might be three or four hundred yards off. I

was scanning it with a curious mixture of interest and apprehension when suddenly I noticed some black object lying on the top. A thrill of excitement ran through me. I put a hand to each side of my mouth and tried to shout, but the effort being futile I got up and made such gestures as I could. At first the gestures were as futile as the attempt to shout, but after a little a man rose to his feet and waved back, while I nearly dropped with excitement. There was no mistaking the small figure and the bizarre dress. It was Fitzroy.

My heart swelled with joy at the sight of a fellow creature, little as was our chance of coming together. Acting in sympathetic concert, each of us sat down on the edge of his berg and gazed at the other with a wistfulness that can easily be appreciated. But we weren't able to exchange a word.

Our bergs were slowly drifting southward, and maintaining their distance. Thus we continued all day, and at nightfall were as far apart as in the morning. The well fed who have their three comfortable meals a day can form no conception of the venom with which hunger fell upon me when I lost sight of my distant companion. Somehow the sense of companionship had staved it off, but that gone the stomach began to clamour and threatened to drive me frantic. De Quincey was driven nearly mad at a certain period of his life by the process of digestion, and I by the want of it. I was so ravenously, painfully hungry that, cold as I was, I was fain to break off a lump of ice and suck it. The water somewhat alleviated my pain, and after a

time I crept into the crevice for greater shelter and forgot my sorrows in sleep.

Next morning we resumed our watch, exchanging such greetings, by means of signals, as our numbed condition and limited appliances would enable us. I understood Fitzroy to say our plight was hopeless, and I felt bound to return my confirmation of his view. To my surprise, however, I did not feel the pangs of hunger so acutely as on the previous day. At first this made me glad, but presently I got alarmed, for I took the cessation of pain as a symptom of sinking vitality. I had just made this dismal discovery and was sitting wretchedly enough thinking of my approaching doom, and how the hungry sea-birds would flock about me till I and my floating island both disappeared in the deep, when I saw Fitzroy gesticulating with, for him, extraordinary vehemence. At first I thought fear and starvation were affecting his reason, but presently I noticed he was pointing eagerly to the N.E. horizon. In another moment I, too, was gesticulating as madly as he. We had sighted a sail. Though my right arm was powerless, my left sore, and my legs weak and almost devoid of sensation, I managed to rise, pull off my coat and wave it as a signal of distress. Fitzroy, unable to pull off his coat, hopped round his berg like a crippled bear.

For a long time, at least what seemed to me a long time though probably it was not more than a quarter of an hour, I could not make out whether the vessel saw us or not. I was ready to jump into the sea at the thought that she might pass us by. At length,



however, with feelings it would be quite vain for me to attempt describing, I perceived her alter her course and bear down upon us. In about an hour she was quite close, and, lowering a boat, sent it to where I was. The officer in charge asked me how I managed to get there. I told him my story briefly, and he said it was the most extraordinary he had ever heard. We then rowed to the other berg and took Fitzroy on board.

When we came to be examined in the captain's cabin it was found that my right and both of Fitzroy's arms were badly frozen. A boat immediately put off for a quantity of ice, which was broken small and cast into two casks full of water. Into these we had to put our arms up to the shoulder, and keep them there for several hours. At first there was no discomfort because there was no sensation, but when the blood began to circulate again the pain became simply terrific. It seemed as if a thousand needles were piercing the flesh at the same moment. The pain of amputation would be mild in comparison. I found all my strength of will necessary to keep one arm in the water, and Fitzroy with two in it bellowed like a bull calf, and had to be kept to his cask by sheer force. But there was no other remedy, if we would save our arms, and when all was over we were grateful for the pain inflicted. With dry clothes and plenty of good food we soon were ourselves again, as full of eager schemes as ever.

The ship, which had been on her way to Manilla for hemp, was obliged to put back into New York for



repairs, having sustained damage during the storm, so that our rescue was nothing short of providential. We got to be good friends with the captain, and one day he said to me:

“Now that you’re a bit seasoned, Cameron, what say you to shipping with me? I go directly back east again.”

“I don’t mind,” I answered, being indeed anxious to visit the East. “Can you take Fitzroy along?”

“If he likes,” returned the captain, “we can probably find him a job.”

When the proposition was put to Fitzroy he readily closed with it, and then and there we engaged to ship on board the bark *Saucy Sue* of Baltimore, Captain Howson





## CHAPTER IV.

### WE ABANDON THE SHIP.

WHILE the boat was being repaired we spent a few days pleasantly enough doing the sights of New York. Fitzroy had been there before, and was able to point out to me many of the more interesting places, such as theatres and gambling palaces, and it was with no slow tongue he expatiated on their histories. In one of our rambles he suddenly stopped before a palatial structure, and taking my arm with an expression of awe and veneration asked if I knew what building it was. I was forced to answer that I did not.

"That, sir," said Mr. Fitzroy, in low and reverent tones, "is Delmonico's."

"And what may Delmonico's be?" I inquired.

"What may Delmonico's be?" he repeated. "Why, bless my soul, Lochiel, what a heathenish muircock you are! Delmonico's is the greatest restaurant on earth—the very greatest. Kings and princes and presidents have supped in there, and I among the rest. It's positively the most famous place in the world."

I answered it was rather singular I had come across no mention of it in my historical reading.

"Pooh!" replied Mr. Fitzroy loftily. "You surely don't depend on history for your knowledge of famous places."

"I am aware," I said, "that I am but a heathenish muircock, as you have neatly put it, with little knowledge save of the heather. My methods of acquiring information are primitive, but I do my best."

"Stuff and nonsense! all stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Fitzroy airily. "History is too sleepy to notice what's interesting to men. History, sir, is a dawdler, a fusty old humbug. She is like a hound that scents the lair when it is cold and empty, or a fox that skips with a mouthful of feathers imagining he has the whole goose. I never read history but I think of my old granny telling stories that didn't interest me one bit. Get something that tells you what a man eats and drinks, how he spends his money—that is the history for you, sir."

He was calmly oblivious of the fact that we were in a crowded thoroughfare, and that his lively gestures and fervid oratory were attracting an audience of the lowest ragamuffins of the plenteously-supplied city of New York. Among them were a couple of very active shoeblacks, who began to clamour and fight for the honour of "shining" Fitzroy's boots. It was such an appeal as most men would have angrily rejected; but Fitzroy was too vain to reject anything in the shape of public attention, and stopping his discourse upon Delmonico's he looked down upon the two importuning imps with a benignant smile.

"Wonderfully enterprising lads," he said. "Now,

I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a foot apiece, and he who finishes first shall have all the money."

Thereupon he drew himself up with the august assumption of a caliph among his slaves, and planted a foot for each boy. For a minute or so the brushes flew about his feet, then both boys sprang up together, each claiming the prize. But Fitzroy smilingly declined to pay either, whereupon the boys first fought each other, then turned round and wanted to fight Fitzroy. As he declined this also they raised such a din of abuse—in which they were zealously assisted by their friends—that I was glad to disburse myself. My action restored quiet for a little, but no sooner had we started to get out of the way than the crowd began to hoot and jeer in a manner which I feared would bring the police on us. Catching Fitzroy—who seemed quite happy and disposed to tarry—savagely by the arm, I pulled him forward, telling him at the same time that if he did not come I should leave him. When we were once more by ourselves I turned angrily upon him:

"Fitzroy, what leads you to make an exhibition of yourself and me in this way?" I said.

"Oh! just a little bit of fun, old fellow," he replied blandly; "nothing more. What's the odds? We may as well enjoy ourselves as not where we are not known."

"Well, if you look at it in that way," I answered curtly, "it's all right so far as you are concerned yourself, only I beg you will give me notice when you intend to indulge, so that I can shift for myself."

"Tut, tut, Lochiel, you mustn't speak like that," he answered gaily. "I'm awfully sorry, upon my

honour I am. Bless your soul, man, I wouldn't offend you for millions;" with which little apology he jauntily linked his arm in mine and jabbered away as lightsomely as if he had never made a fool of himself in his life.

I was glad when the *Saucy Sue* was ready for sea, for I was longing to get away from New York. I set sail with a lighter heart than I could have believed possible for one in my position. My imagination, I suppose, was excited, for my head was full of all the romance I had heard and read of the gorgeous East; and I am sure I forgave all my enemies, even the bailie who had sent me to jail. I could not feel the same exultation now starting on any voyage whatsoever; and doubtless the reason is, I was young then, and now I am old.

Glorious youthful days! When I look back to you, after all my ups and downs and stormy adventures, my eyes swim in mists and my head seems to grow dizzy with longing.

Afar off in the distance that never grows dim I behold myself another individual, walking on an enchanted shore of promise, wistfully looking out upon the rich, bright future, eager to plunge into it and explore its mysteries and grasp its prizes; and I have plunged and explored and grasped, and would fain be back there again, with no prize but the hope in my heart that then filled it. It would be hard for anyone looking at me to-day, with my grizzly, corrugated countenance, to make out that my face had ever been soft and young; and yet no long time has passed since it was both.

But why do I write thus? All the bright effluences of youth have gone—gone like those mirages on which I have so often looked in African deserts—and left not a wrack behind. I'm an old fool on these matters. I'm what writers and critics call sentimental. Well, I'm as I was made, and I can't help it. I wasn't my own architect, or some things might be different; but I don't quarrel with my failings either: they are there for a wise purpose. And let me have just one more confidential word with those of my readers who are still young, and it is this: Cherish your youth, do not be impatient to throw it away, for when you are going down the hill it will be the one thing of all others you will most desire to repossess, and your desire shall be all in vain. I look on this life as containing just two certainties amid its infinite number of uncertainties, and these are, first, that we shall die, and, second, that till that take place we shall be growing old. There now, I have done preaching, and promise to abstain throughout the rest of this volume. And let's to our narrative.

When we reached the open sea a spanking breeze sprang up in our starboard quarter, and we flew along as blithesome a crew as ever trod a ship's deck.

Captain Howson was a capital fellow, a first-rate seaman, a jovial companion; had been in all sorts of fixes, and was merry as a marriage-bell after all. Fitzroy's absurdities yielded him constant entertainment; and he often started a conversation just to hear that pretentious little gentleman pronounce upon matters of which he was totally ignorant. Fitzroy's

audacity was nothing short of marvellous. There was nothing in heaven or earth or in the waters under the earth with which he was not perfectly familiar. And whatever he talked upon he invariably ended up with a screed of his own adventures. I am at a loss to this moment whether he had actually gone through them all, as he pretended, or whether he had stolen them from books. I am so little read myself that he might have purloined the half of them without my knowledge. Captain Howson told me privately he looked upon him as the biggest liar he had ever met, without any exception, and he had met a good many. Yet there was an air of reality about his narratives which made me at first hesitate to endorse the captain's opinion. When you came to question him he was ever so ready with his answer, so full and lucid in detail, that you would have sworn nothing but personal knowledge could have made him so clear. On the other hand, I knew from his conduct on board the *Glenlivet* that he was an arrant coward, and as he never figured but courageously in his own tales I confess my confidence in his veracity was a little shaken. But whether a liar or not, he was diverting, and in appearance extremely good-humoured. The ugliest thing that could be said to him never produced more than a smile, and he had a good deal to stand.

The sailors had a monkey and a parrot on board. The one they taught to ape him in action and gesture, the other to mimic him in words. I was often angry myself at the preposterous way in which that monkey acted. He would come grinning along the deck, squat himself at



a safe distance from Fitzroy, and there begin his aggravating mimicry. Then if Fitzroy gave chase he would clamber up the rigging and gibber at him from above. This went on for some time, to the great delight of the sailors. But one morning the peccant monkey was found lying fast by the capstan with his skull split open, and I fancied that Fitzroy's step was a trifle airier that morning and his smile a trifle more cheerful than was usual, even with him. The death of its companion seemed to rouse the parrot to a high degree of vindictiveness. It was tame enough to have the liberty of the ship, and would follow Fitzroy round, perching above his head and calling out, "Tell us some lies, boss; Tell us a whopper, boss; Ye take the cake for lying," and such like handsome phrases, while the men could be seen peeping out here and there in convulsions of laughter. Remembering the fate of the monkey, however, the owner of the bird kept a sharp eye on it. But it is a wakeful vigilance that never sleeps. One morning he found his pet dangling from a beam, after the manner of dead fowls in a market, with its neck broken. Fitzroy was as innocent and smiling as usual; but some time after he came to me with a cunning expression and said, "That's settled," meaning the persecution of the monkey and parrot.

"Did you kill them?" I asked.

"A wink's as good's a nod to a blind horse," he answered, "and a deaf ear makes a mute tongue."

"Why," I said, pretending to be piqued at his distrust, "do you mean to insinuate that I'd go and tell?"

"Man, Lochiel, but ye have the real Highland dander in ye," he said. "Sniff's offence where none is intended. I only meant to say that the things came by their death in the dark, when nobody was looking on."

"But you," I said.

"Out again, my boy; but they're dead and ended, and there's no use quarrelling about them."

"You make a mountain of a mole-hill," I said. "What's the use of all this mystification about a parrot and a monkey? Say ye brained the one and thraved the neck of the other, and be done with it."

"Whist! How did I know there were no eavesdroppers about? But you're a good guesser; I must give you credit for that."

He looked cautiously round to make sure no one was listening, then he bent confidentially to me and said:

"If I got my way it wouldn't be the monkey and the parrot that would be dead now. I say no more. Can I depend on you to keep your gab?"

"You little villain—"

"Whist!" he said, interrupting me. "No moralizing just at present. You stick to me and I'll stick to you. I say no more. There's more in me than ye think, maybe. Men are not to be measured by their bodily bulk. I'm jimpit in stature, but—" and Mr. Fitzroy winked very significantly. He looked at me for a while with one eye closed and the other laughing maliciously, then turned and walked away. I was a good deal puzzled by his words, but as I was never good at conundrums I dismissed them from my mind, and went about my business.

Meantime the sailing had been delightful. With steady winds, and a gradually rising temperature our progress was swift and pleasant. Our first stoppage was at Cape Town, where we put in for fresh water. It is not an interesting place; being full of dirty Kafirs, greasy Dutchmen, and lazy Englishmen. We were glad to be off again to the blissful Indian Ocean. For whole days we sailed on almost rippleless waters. Our progress, of course, was slower now, but we were enjoying ourselves. Looking back it seems to me our time was spent in telling yarns. Day after day, night after night, we dawdled along on that resplendent sea, for resplendent it literally was. I often doubted whether I were not dreaming, so delightful beyond anything I had ever experienced was the life I led. But mariners say they do not fancy superfine weather in those latitudes. They say that oriental weather, like oriental character, is not to be too implicitly trusted; and we were destined soon to prove the truth of this observation. About noon one day, when we were in lat.  $20^{\circ}$  S. and  $60^{\circ}$  E., the barometer began to show signs of uneasiness. We were scarcely moving at all, it was so still. We looked about, and on the N.W. horizon was the tiniest speck of a black cloud. But it grew with incredible rapidity, while the surrounding sky in that quarter became a dull black.

"We're in for it," said Captain Howson grasping his trumpet, and proceeding to get ready for the storm. It must be remembered that up to this we had been running almost under full sail. If the hurricane caught us in that plight we should be overwhelmed instantly.

Even with our first movements to set ourselves in readiness, a sharp whiff of hot wind bellied our sails. Then the brazen voice of the trumpet began to hurl its commands, and every man of us was alert.

It was thrilling to hear the brazen thing shouting as if animated with a sudden sense of danger.

"Haul down main royal and mizzen to'gallan' sails—clew up fore and aft main royals—haul down flying-jib and mizzen gaff to'sails."

Already we were dipping heavily, and our speed, notwithstanding the diminished canvas, was fast increasing.

"Haul down main to'gallan' and mizzen to'mast stay-sails—clew up fore and main to'gallan' sails—haul the main-sail up—brail in the spanker, and haul the jib down."

While this order was being executed, the captain conferred with the mate.

"I'd put her right under storm canvas, sir," I heard the latter say, and immediately the trumpet spoke again.

"Reef fore and main to'sails, lower down, and furl them."

We were now under storm canvas, and already labouring heavily.

"That's safer sir," said the mate, "and I think she can carry it."

He was an old sailor, and a good one; but he had miscalculated for once. The hurricane absolutely lifted the sea into mountains, and pressed the *Saucy Sue* till she threatened to go down at every lurch.

"She can't carry it," said the captain, and up went the trumpet again.

"Haul down main-to' stay-sail, and clew up fore and lower to'sail—haul down fore to'mast stay-sail—clew up main to'sail."

Still the hurricane increased.

"Haul down mizzen stay-sail."

Scarcely had these orders been executed when the blast struck us like a whole park of artillery. Yards were instantly laid dead square, and with a tremendous effort the vessel was brought to with the tarpaulin lashed against the mizzen-rigging. But it seemed the utterest presumption to attempt keeping her to in such a sea. Not only was the hurricane fierce, but the ocean seemed to be rising from its very foundations to overwhelm us. Our masts went by the board as if they had been hollow bark, the vessel was water-logged and seemed to be sinking. Yet after a minute she rose like a half-drowned thing from the sea, and reeling about for a little finally righted. But the ballast had shifted, and she was crank. It was in vain that the three men at the tiller struggled to control her. Had that blast continued three minutes longer I should not be writing the present history. That single onset, lasting perhaps for four minutes, was the worst. When it was over we eased a little, though the seas were still sweeping us from stem to stern. But we soon found that the *Saucy Sue* did not bear up as she ought. In fact, it was painfully evident it was nearly all over with her, and the boats were held in readiness. We hoped, however, that she might hold together and

afloat until the sea had subsided a bit, for no boat could live in it as it was. We now got time to examine the vessel a bit, and found her whole framework hopelessly shattered, and, as the doctors say, she had sustained severe internal injuries as well.

We stuck to her in that state for several hours, but at last we were forced into the boats, for the poor *Saucy Sue*, no longer saucy but terribly crestfallen, was settling down. We lowered two boats, put provisions and water in each for six weeks, and bade our vessel good-bye. Fitzroy and I were in the same boat, with seven seamen and the captain. We lingered until the ship went out of sight, then set sail, we hardly knew whither.





## CHAPTER V.

### ADrift IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

WHEN darkness fell the boats were within hailing distance of each other, but when day dawned ours was alone in the ocean solitude. We could not tell whether the mate's boat had mistaken its course (we had agreed to keep N.E. by E.), or whether they had all perished. The captain took his binocular and swept the sea from horizon to horizon, but not a speck was visible.

"They have gone down," he said, sadly. "I'm certain they would not have left us; besides, they could scarcely be out of view yet if they did leave us."

This, added to our own forlorn condition, made our thoughts dismal enough. But we had ourselves to look to, and after making certain that our late companions were beyond our help, we hoisted sail and kept on our course, having to steer full and by. It was blowing tolerably fresh then. After a while we were obliged to take down the sail, and when we had rowed twelve hours in a restless sea it again blew great guns, and the little craft tossed like a cockle-shell. We rigged a sea-anchor and rode the gale. On the second night three sea-anchors were lost, and the same night



the boat capsized and five of the crew were drowned, including the captain. It was only by tremendous exertion and good luck that the rest of us managed to regain the boat after she righted. I had taken in a bellyful of salt water, and as I lay over the side trying my best to get it off, a man rose right under me. He was not struggling, but came quietly up on his back as a trout does in a fresh-water stream when lime has been thrown in. Making a grab at him I caught him by the whiskers, and found it was Fitzroy. With some assistance I lifted him into the boat. He groaned a good deal, and seemed in the last stages of exhaustion. We cleared him of water as well as possible, then laid him in the bottom of the boat and began to chafe him and beat him with our hands. At length he opened his eyes, looked about him for a little, then gave a groan of horror and closed them again. The next instant he was screaming like a frightened baby.

"He's all right," said one of the sailors. "A man who can holler like that ain't bound for Davy Jones just yet."

This somewhat unsympathetic opinion proved to be right. He continued whimpering for some time, then all at once broke out into piteous entreaties to be taken care of.

"Shet yer mouth, ye durned lubber, or I'll score ye with a rope's-end," said another sailor savagely. "Ain't we keerin' for ye? Ain't ye high and dry on a boat's bottom? Maybe ye want a whale to swallow ye, ye miserable cauterwauler. Maybe yer hankerin' after yer deserts."

I glanced round and saw that the speaker was the owner of the late monkey. Fitzroy stopped whimpering, and looked up also. He raised himself to his elbow and smiled; but I could not help feeling his smile had more malice in it than the blackest scowl I had ever seen. Indeed, since his mysterious speech to me on board the *Saucy Sue*, I had my suspicions of Fitzroy, and this smile did not tend to remove them.

"Aye," he said, still with that demoniac grin on his face, "I'm much obliged to you; you have quite cured me, and I won't forget it to you."

In a few minutes he was apparently as well as ever and quite restored to his old jaunty humour.

When the boat capsized we lost all our provisions, our water, our instruments, and our oars except one. We could do nothing for ourselves, so we sat in the bottom of the boat and brooded on our impending doom.

Night came and went again, and still we sat in the same attitude of mute despair. Whatever courage we had had was gone. I confess it frankly, I was as bad as the rest, utterly unnerved and unable to stir. Towards the afternoon we made some effort to discuss the situation, but it seemed so entirely hopeless without provisions or oars that our talk only left us more despondent than ever. Night fell again, and again the burnishing sun found us sunk in inanition. Not one of us had slept though we were all thoroughly worn out. I was stiff and sore from sitting so long in the same posture. All of us were hungry, too, and desperately thirsty, and not a morsel of bread nor a drop of water to be had. This was worse than my iceberg experience; for while

I had been hungry then I was spared the more cruel torture of thirst. Now they were both upon me. What would we not have given for a crumb from a beggar's pouch, or a mouthful of water from the dirtiest pond in which ducks and cattle wallowed, aye even were it as thick as treacle, if it contained no salt? But the longing came upon us with a crushing sense of its vanity, and we could only look at each other in blank despair. To think of making our way anywhere in particular were foolishness. We knew not where we were, and were just as likely to be rescued by remaining still as by exhausting ourselves in trying to make way with a single oar. So we remained sitting there in passive helplessness hoping against hope. Then all at once a sense of desolate loneliness seized us. Even the winds had forsaken us, and such a calm reigned as can only be likened to the silence that prevails among the dead. In that abysmal hush of the ocean we scarcely dared to speak. When I became conscious of this oppressive silence I would have given almost as much for the sound of a bell, or a cheery human voice, as for drink or food, and I would have given the world for these if I had possessed it. I had read about the silence of aboriginal forests, and had experienced something of the silence of mountains, but both the one and the other seemed to me to have a roar like Niagara in comparison with this. There was absolutely no sound in all that glistening expanse of water, not even a ripple against our boat. Added to all this the air was daily getting hotter and hotter till we could see it quivering like the air in a furnace. Every breath we

drew seemed to carry a fiery impalpable something into our nostrils and lungs, which often made us gasp just as a man gasps after a gulp of strong brandy. And the beams of the sun struck us like pointed arrows. Had we been in a good ship and under proper covering the heat must have been hard to bear, but in our condition it was terrible. There we lay a mere atom on the bosom of the great ocean under the blaze of an Indian sun without a scrap of awning to shade us. It is a mystery to me how we escaped sunstroke. The timbers of the boat were cracking and twisting as if it were hung before a blazing furnace. Day by day, too, indeed hour by hour our bodily condition was getting more desperate. Bad as our hunger was our thirst was a thousand times worse, and one or two from sheer agony were lapping the brackish waters. Our lips were swollen and hacked as if they had been scored with a lance and then cauterized with a red-hot iron. Oh for a drop of water! just one little drop to ease our scorching throats and lips! But no:

“Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.”

At length on the fourth day one of the crew, unable to control himself any longer, whipped out his knife, and, slitting up a vein like the ancient mariner, began to suck the blood. The other two did the same. I turned away from the sickening sight, and my heart died within me, for I thought cannibalism would be

next. When I ventured to turn back Fitzroy also was sucking away at his wrist, with a glare in his eyes which made me shiver.

"Do it, Lochiel," he croaked; "do it!"

My lips were too sore to speak, so I shook my head; while I trembled all over as if I had a fit of the ague.

"That's good," said the owner of the late monkey; "and when this is done I'll have more, if I have somebody's life for it!"

He glared fiercely at Fitzroy, and I could see the incipient fires of delirium lighting his eyes.

"Try it," croaked Fitzroy, returning the glare with interest. "Try it!"

The sailor gave a growl like an angry dog, and was about to spring at his antagonist. Fear gave me courage and energy, and rising to my feet I commanded them both to be quiet instantly, or they should go over the side.

The sailor fell back sulkily; and Fitzroy, glancing at me, said:

"Bravo, Lochiel! Put the brute over."

"Silence!" I said. "Are you going to throw away our only chance of life by squabbling, when we ought to be standing shoulder to shoulder?"

The exertion rent my hardened lips and the blood came spurting out. Instinctively I put out my tongue and licked the moisture.

"See! see!" said the sailor; "he licks blood like a dog!"

He made a feint of coming towards me. "Sit

down!" I said, grasping the oar, which, however, in my exhausted state I was not able to lift; "or, as sure as death, I'll brain you on the spot!"

He sat down glaring at me and muttering to himself.

"Do it, Lochiel!" croaked Fitzroy. "Do it! Brain him! Kill him!"

"Be quiet," I said, turning sharply upon him. "Mind, there are still three of us here who are not mad. So look out for yourself. Are you not still my friend?"

"Right, Lochiel!" he answered. "But, man, it would be cordial to my heart to see the fellow dead."

I said no more, but gave him a look which I think was more effective than words could have been, for he immediately lapsed into silence.

Our unnatural draughts revived us all, but they made us suspicious of one another. I saw then how easily men may become cannibals, and how little our civilization avails us when our natural passions are roused. There we were, five Christian men, watching like starving tigers for a chance to kill and eat each other. But in a life-and-death pinch savage and civilized are the same, if indeed the former be not the better of the two.

This new element of suspicion added another evil to our already desperate condition. Had we been in common well disposed we could at least have cheered one another. Now even that insubstantial solace was cut away, and our most pressing danger was from ourselves. We had long since given over all notion of



being saved, and indeed paid no attention whatever to our boat. She lay there on the quiescent waters without a thought from us. I don't think we had made three yards in three days. What was the use? We could die as well on that spot as on any other. He who is near his end cares little where he is.

On the evening of the fifth day we sat looking at each other like ghastly skeletons that were about to bear each other company to the land of the dead. It had been a fearfully hot day. The water sent up steaming fumes from below, the sky was merciless above. When I saw the sun a ball of living fire sink into the sea to the west of us, I felt that I had taken my last look at him. When he should have circled to the east again and risen to a fresh day's persecution, I should be beyond his sphere, beyond his reach. I thought almost with a thrill of exultation in my foolish heart that at least he would not be gratified by seeing me die. What miserable things we are in our extremities! While these unregenerate thoughts occupied me I chanced to glance at one of my companions, named Dick Stanley. I had looked upon him all along as a man of iron. When almost everybody else had lost their heads in the storm that had overcome the *Saucy Sue* he had been cool and active. Now to my utter astonishment I saw him looking fixedly at the departing sun, with big tears rolling down his haggard face.

"He is thinking that he shall never see it again just like myself," I thought.

When he, the iron-nerved and experienced sailor, lost

heart, I the inexperienced stripling might well be pardoned for doing the same.

Presently he noticed me gazing at him and came crawling towards me.

"If help don't come to-night I don't think we shall see him again," he whispered hoarsely with an inclination of the head towards the setting luminary.

I answered that I was of the same mind.

"It's rough on you, mate, because ye're young and likely have a father and mother waitin' for ye somewhere," he said in the same husky whisper. "But it lays me right over to think of a wife and children prayin' night after night for the ship that'll never come home."

"Praying?" I said. "Have you a wife and children to pray for you?"

"Aye, lad; and they do it when they go to sleep and when they waken purtier than anything you ever heard."

A wild hope leapt into my heart. I felt suddenly energized.

"Then," I said, "we shall not perish; we shall live, we shall be saved. I know it."

I know not what inspired me, but at that moment I was as certain of delivery as if I had actually seen a sail bearing down upon us.

"You are raving, lad," replied Dick. "Many a man has gone to the bottom with wife and children prayin' for him, many a one, lad."

"Then you don't believe in prayer?" I said.

"That ain't the question, lad. God don't answer

every prayer. No, nor the half; only them that are right. We don't know when we're right or when we're wrong; and maybe when we think best of ourselves we're farthest from the right course. There ain't no compass that'll point the straight course there."

"I cannot argue," I said; "but we shall be saved, I know it. Have you never felt a certainty of anything in your bones without being able to account for it?"

He thought for a little, and I never saw so sad a face on anybody.

"I don't know but I have, lad," he answered at length.

"And weren't you right?" I asked eagerly.

"I don't know, lad. My head ain't clear for rekillec-tin'. But it's a mighty crank and leaky ship to sail in, lad, that same certainty in your bones; mighty crank and leaky. But I sha'n't contradict ye; it ain't lucky to kill hope or fly in the face of a good prophecy."

I was about to add some further remarks when I was arrested by a violent rocking of the boat, and looking up I saw Fitzroy's late antagonist coming staggering from the stern. There was no mistaking the light in his eyes; he was mad, stark mad. Starvation and salt water had done their work. Yet there was a certain method in his madness, for he fixed his glittering eye on Fitzroy and made straight at him. Fitzroy instantly crept under a bench, and entreated me as well as he could to save him.

"Ralston, go and sit down!" I said, addressing the sailor. But I had lost my authority.

"I want him—him—him!" he shrieked, opening his

jaws and pointing at Fitzroy. "Give me him; he killed my monkey, the best monkey that ever was. Give me him, I say, ah!—" grating his teeth.

With great difficulty I rose to my feet. "Keep back," I said; "do not come another step or it will be the worse for you."

"He-he-he!" laughed Ralston. "I'll have his life, I tell ye," and with that he lurched forward and laid hold of me.

It was in vain that I struggled with him. He lifted me off my feet as I would lift a baby, and hurled me head-foremost into the sea. But the jolt to the boat was so great that he came over after me. With an energy of which I did not believe him capable, Fitzroy was instantly up with the oar and struck Ralston a blow on the head. It was well aimed, and the victim went down like a stone. Then the oar was reached to me, and by its aid I managed to regain the boat.

"Didn't I tell you I'd stick to you," croaked Fitzroy. "See, there I've saved your life."

These were the last words I caught, for what with fright and exhaustion, I fell into a swoon. When I regained consciousness I was lying in a snug berth on board some ship.



## CHAPTER VI.

### CONSPIRACY.

I WAS naturally much amazed to find myself alive and in a snug bed. It reminded me of stories I had read about miraculous escapes which I fancied the writers made up out of their own heads.

"Well," I said to myself, "this is surely the strangest thing that ever befell mortal. Yesterday lost on the ocean, to-day comfortably tucked in a bunk, and the interval a blank. I'm not dreaming either, that's certain, for when I pinch myself I feel pain. Upon my honour, this is romantic enough for a story. But I wonder where the dickens I am and how I got here."

With that I raised my head and looked about me. I was in a very small apartment, which I had little difficulty in making out to be the cabin of a ship. This conclusion was confirmed by the sound of footsteps overhead and the rush of water outside. It was neat and orderly, and contained but the single berth I lay on. But there was a loneliness about it which made me feel eerie. I attempted to rise, but was so weak and giddy that I was forced to lie down again. In this enforced supineness I fell again to thinking of my inexplicable situation.

"I wonder if I'm the only survivor," I said to myself. "It would almost seem as if out of two shipfuls of people I alone were destined to live. Perhaps it is a merciful fate that takes my companions away from evils to come."

While I was wandering in this maze of thought the door opened, and a tall burly man of forty or so, whom I at once took to be the captain, entered.

"Well, mate, how goes it?" he asked cheerily.

"I don't know," I answered, feeling very much like a burglar that has been taken unawares. "How did I get here?"

"Well, that question might come more naturally from me than from you," he said, "seeing I have caught you in my bunk. But how d'ye feel? That's the point now."

"Oh, so-so," I answered as lightly as I could; "but I'm puzzled to make out where I am or how I got here. My last recollection is of frizzling like a red herring in a small boat; now I find myself snugly ensconced in a berth."

"Supernatural transition, my lad," he said laughing. "The old man of the sea has got you for certain; but to show that, like another famous gentleman, he's not so bad as he's called, take this," and he poured me out a glass of some cordial. As soon as I had swallowed it I felt wondrously revived. Then all at once my curiosity returned.

"Where am I?" I asked again.

"Never mind. Aren't you in snug quarters?" he answered. "Here, now, I'll get something to bathe



your lips, then you may be able to eat a morsel." He bathed my lips first with lukewarm water—oh, how grateful it was!—then with glycerine, after which he made me swallow a couple of mouthfuls of the latter to allay the irritation of the stomach. Then he brought me about three spoonfuls of chicken soup.

"Is that all I'm going to get?" I asked, for the three spoonfuls had only revealed to me how exceedingly hungry I was.

"All just now. In an hour or so you'll get some more, and perhaps a bit of wing."

"Well, would you mind telling me now where I am, and whither bound?"

"You're uncommonly curious," he answered with a smile. "Isn't it enough for you to know that you are beyond the reach of sharks and that you're not frizzling to a cinder in yon bit of a boat."

"I'm thankful for all that," I said. "Still you will pardon the natural curiosity of one who awakens to find himself in such an unexpected place as this."

"Well, since you must know, you're on board the *Nelly Gray* of Boston, 1600 tons burden—Captain Henderson, at your service—Sumatra to New York, with tobacco and some other little things."

"Just one question more, captain—What has become of my companions?"

"How many had you?"

"Four—no, three—one went overboard."

"Well, the three are on board, and now take care of yourself and lie still. Ta, ta," and with that he slipped from the room and closed the door. A feeling of deep

thankfulness came over me that my companions had been saved as well as myself; especially Dick Stanley, in whom I had taken an absorbing interest. Then I fell into a reverie and from that into a deep sleep. I must have slept for some hours, for I awoke much refreshed and so hungry that but for the sheer folly of the thing I could have gnawed the blankets. Perhaps I felt my hunger more because my other pains were easier. My lips were already much better, my tongue wagged with something of its old freedom, and my throat no longer felt as if baking over a slow fire.

I was not long awake when the captain entered, bearing in his hand a black bottle and a glass. He poured me out some more cordial, stronger than the last, which I swallowed almost without letting it touch my mouth; then he went away and brought me half a dozen spoonfuls of soup and about the third of the wing of a very small fowl.

"Captain," I said when I had finished these, "you will excuse me, but I don't think you quite understand my case. I'm as empty as a drum; not a particle of food has passed my gullet for six days. Now, do you consider a few spoonfuls of clear soup and as much meat as you'd get off the wing of a bum-bee enough for a man in such a case?"

"Aye, unless he was for the sharks," answered the captain laconically. "Keep up your heart, it's of more consequence than your stomach. You'll get more next time," and away he went.

"Well," I said to myself, "sharks or no sharks, I can't bide this any longer; I must have something to

eat;" whereupon I got up, and supporting myself by the walls began a raid for food. I opened all the drawers I saw, turned over heaps of books and instruments, and examined the floor on my hands and knees. But I could discover nothing eatable. Then I crawled to the door and opened it to see whether there were not someone about I could bribe to bring me a biscuit. Hardly had I opened it and peered out when I caught sight of Fitzroy groping along the passage. In the same instant he saw me.

"Hallo!" he called in his old cheery way, though his voice was still a trifle husky. "Just looking for you."

"Fitzroy," I said, "can you get me anything to eat—anything at all? I'm famishing, and that captain won't give me a blessed morsel."

The lie escaped me before I knew it was on my tongue. At that moment I happened to turn my eyes to the other side, and there leaning against the partition beside me was Dick Stanley. His silent appearance almost gave me the idea of an apparition, but the solid bony hand which grasped mine and the thick voice—Dick had a chronic huskiness—speedily reassured me.

"Glad to see ye, lad," he said; "glad to see ye. I was afeerd of ye last night."

By this time Fitzroy also was standing beside me.

"God bless me, Lochiel!" he exclaimed, breaking in between Dick and myself. "Ye mind me of the witches in auld Alloway's haunted kirk."

"How?"

"You're in your shirt tails, man; bless my soul, you're in your shirt tails, and I declare I never saw such scanty tails in my life. Fegs ye have grown a glint since your mother made ye that; but lord, man, ye have no shanks at a' for a Hielandman!"

He took the liberty of putting out his hand and feeling my limbs, an operation I didn't relish, so I slipped back and sprang into bed. Having thus secured decency I invited my companions to come in, a trouble I might have spared myself, for they were entering of their own accord.

"I think I heard ye say something about famishin', lad?" said Dick, seating himself on the edge of my berth.

I answered that the word famishing conveyed but a faint idea of my condition, but I had used it as the best I could think of.

"I'm right glad to hear it, lad," said Dick.

"Why, Dick, I thought you had a heart in you," I said.

"So I have, lad, lestways my mates have always said so; and havin' a heart I'm glad ye're hungry as can be, and I'm glad, too, they have had the sense to put ye on short rations."

"You're a—"

"Now, listen. In '49 I shipped in the *Cleopatra* whaler, Captain Jenkin—as good a seaman as ever made for the frozen north—poor fellow, the bears and wolves hev him now. We sailed pretty with a steady sou'-wester on our port quarter, an' we sat most of the time jawin' and tellin' yarns, till one night, suddint as

lightin', a rattlin' nor'-easter ketched us, and after knockin' us about and dismantlin' us threw us on the coast of Labrador. Half the crew were drowned, and t'other half went a week without any grub. We were like chatterin' shadders; and though our teeth got nothin' to chew they kept goin' all the same. They just minded me of the chatterin' of empty hoppers. They were so bad that we couldn't get any sleep o' nights with 'em. But that ain't the pint. Them as lived of us were reskied. On the steamer there was a young chap with spectacles, who was the surgeon and had a mighty soft heart. Well, he piled on the grub and drink as fast as we could swaller, and we stowed away purty lively, I tell ye; because our stummicks were just like scuttled ships, ye see, or tailors' thimbles—there was no fillin' of 'em. But after working hard for a while we had to heave-to. What was the consikence? That night two men died of over-eatin', next day three, and followin' day one. It don't do to crowd on all sail all of a suddint on a crank stummick in stress of weather, because, ye see, there ain't no ballast."

"I see your drift," I said; "and I suppose they were saving me, when, upon my honour, I thought they were doing their best to starve me."

Then I returned to my great puzzle—how I had got on board the *Nelly Gray*.

"Quite nat'rilly," replied Dick. "She ran us down in the dark, and in course hove-to to see what was up. We were all picked up in our senses, 'cept you, and I was mighty feered of ye, lad—I may tell ye now when yer better."

"That was one of the neatest feats I ever performed," said Fitzroy, now as always full of himself as ever.

"What feat?" I said.

"Well, you see a breeze had sprung up which filled her sails pretty well, giving her perhaps seven or eight knots an hour. She struck us amidships, and, of course, sent us sprawling. I dived to save myself. I came up just beside a boat they had lowered, and got in, and here I am famishing like you, Lochiel, but otherwise as chirpy as a bird in spring."

"For so small a man ye're the biggest talker I ever seen," said Dick, looking at Fitzroy contemptuously.

Fitzroy did not reply, but I saw he was offended, and ere long he came very near being well revenged. After that my diet grew more generous, and in a few days I was again on deck. I was not much in love with the idea of returning to New York, but since I had escaped with my life where so many had perished it did not become me to cavil.

I do not intend to give a minute description of our life for the next two weeks. While it was interesting enough to ourselves, nothing befell us that does not befall hundreds of other ships every week. On first moving round I was struck with the excellent order and discipline kept by Captain Henderson, nor was I less struck with the good will that seemed to exist between officers and crew, and amongst the crew themselves. I have rarely been on a ship where things seemed to go so much of their own accord. Indeed it might have seemed to a novice that the



captain's post was a pure sinecure, with so little friction or apparent foresight was everything done at the proper moment in the proper way. I have since discovered that it is only blockheads and bunglers who are for ever in a hurry and bustle, playing the deuce with themselves and all about them. In an African kingdom which I visited, when a buzzing nonentity of this sort is discovered a ring is put through each ear, to which cords are attached, while he is gagged and his hands strapped to his sides. Then a couple of old women lead him out to some public place, where the king and his court are assembled, and after proclaiming to the multitude that he is sillier than the crone of a thousand moons or the infant of one, spit upon him as a mark of indignity, then hand him over to the youngest boy warrior, who kills him at a thrust. And I have never seen abler men anywhere than in that Central African kingdom.

Captain Henderson was a man of leisure, too, because he was first a man of order and energy. He was also the most intelligent sea captain I have ever met; that is, he knew more about what goes on ashore than sea captains commonly do. As a rule your sea captain doesn't care a fig what landmen are doing or thinking, and consequently is very ignorant of things outside the briny. But Captain Henderson knew both sea and land. He and I became fast friends, and by degrees I told him my story. He urged me to go back home as soon as we reached New York.

"This Gulliver-like wandering about the world may be interesting in print, but it's generally fatal in

practice," he said. "Go back to your home; your parents are good folks and will forgive you."

"I'm ashamed," I answered.

"Ashamed," he repeated half angrily. "I wish we could blot that dastardly word out of our vocabularies and memories. It is the very devil of language, and does more mischief than any other single word whatsoever. Why should you be ashamed? You got into a little row unexpectedly; besides have we not all to ask forgiveness of a Higher and Mightier than either father or mother? Do not be a coward; confess your folly—none but fools are always in the right—and go back and make glad the hearts of the old folks."

I could not but acknowledge the wisdom of his remarks, and while I did not openly promise to obey him—I was too proud for that—I inwardly resolved to return home at the very first opportunity.

But, alas, which of us can fully carry out our own intentions?

In addition to being intelligent Captain Henderson was a man of principle, and consequently an uncompromising hater of shams. Perhaps it was this sterling quality which led Fitzroy to hate him; at any rate hate him he did with a cordiality which could scarcely be exceeded. I now began to see that Fitzroy's character did not lie altogether on the surface, and that the further down you went the uglier it was. I had seen something of him in his treatment of the mad sailor; I now saw more of him in his demeanour towards Captain Henderson; and I was fated to see

still deeper into him after Captain Henderson was no more.

We had two Manilla men on board with whom he had got on suspiciously confidential terms. At first I thought it was only because he wanted to learn their language; but I soon began to perceive that in their conversations they generally betook themselves as far from company as possible, and that their talk was too earnest for any mere amusement. Even Dick Stanley noticed their conduct, and one day said to me:

"Our little friend is mighty thick with the coolies; I hope there's nothing in the wind."

This remark, added to my own suspicions, made me so uneasy that I resolved to question Fitzroy. He assured me he had no motive but to hear them talk their own language, which he said was exceedingly musical. As if to convince me of the truth of his statement he scarcely ever spoke to them for days after this. The matter was slipping out of my mind, when one night, just as I was about to turn in, Ned Freely, the negro cook, came to me mysteriously and whispered that Fitzroy wanted to see me in the pantry. As he often went there to have a nip of whisky I followed Ned without any misgivings. I was surprised, however, on reaching the pantry to find Fitzroy and the two coolies standing in whispered conversation. I saw at once that something was up, and a premonition of evil flashed upon me. However, I did not show that I suspected anything was amiss, and stood calmly to hear what was to be said. As soon as I entered the door was closed and fastened.

To make a show of hospitality a bottle of whisky and some bread and cheese were laid conspicuously on a shelf.

"Pass over that bottle," said Fitzroy with a swagger; "I'm sure Lochiel's dry in this parching atmosphere."

"No, thank you; I don't feel the least thirsty," I said.

"Come on, Lochiel," said Fitzroy, "none of your cold water business here; you a Highlander, and refusing to drink whisky," and with that he poured me out a glass.

"I won't drink, I tell you," I said.

"Man, you're a thrawn brute," he said sullenly, handing back the glass and bottle.

The more I saw of things the less I liked them, and as the best way of reaching a crisis I asked what they wanted with me.

"Lochiel," said Fitzroy very deliberately, "I have saved your life once already, now I'm going to save it again."

"What do you mean?" I demanded sternly.

"Simply this, that if you had gone to your bunk you should never have left it alive. We're all adventurers, you know, and it doesn't become us to be fastidious. Do you smell a rat?"

"I don't know what I smell," I said. "Perhaps you'll be good enough to explain."

"You're no so blind's you're letting on," he answered. "How would you like to be made master of this ship?"

"Fitzroy," I said, "this jesting is out of season. If

you have anything to say to me say it and let me go."

"If I had intended to let you go so easily I should never have sent for you," he said. "This is no jest, as you shall find ere long."

"What in Heaven's name are you driving at?" I demanded.

He undid the fastening of the door, opened it and peered out, then closed and fastened it again.

"This, Lochiel," he said, drawing himself up like a little fiend, "that we have made up our minds to take this ship. This world is made up of two orders—beasts of prey and their victims. We have been victims long enough—now we're going to try the beast of prey part. Are you ready to join us?"

"Never," I answered, almost bursting with indignation. "Rise against the man who has saved our lives! Never. The proposition is monstrous and worthy only of the devil in hell."

"Canny, my man; no so fast. Comparisons are odious. There's no merit in Henderson's act. Anybody else would have done all he has done."

"This is not a thing to be argued about," I said. "The mere mention of it is infamous, and I tell you I will have no hand in your project; and what is more I'll do my very best to frustrate it. Let me out."

"No," said Fitzroy, "we'll not let you out; and what's more, if you make another speech like that we'll spatter your brains on that wall. So drive your tongue a bit easier."

"Better that one should die than a whole shipful," I said. "Blow out my brains if you like. It will at least serve to warn the others that there are murderers on board."

"Aye aye, man, but you're a brave fellow. But there's no use talking, Lochiel; we have discussed this matter over and over again, and are not to be turned aside simply because our plans don't meet with your approval. We're going to have this ship, that's fixed and settled; and we're going to kill every mother's son who won't assist us, that's fixed and settled too."

"Well then, kill me; for I won't help you."

"You're my friend, Lochiel, and it would go sore against my heart to dispose of ye; but, as I have told you, we can't be hindered in this business by your tomfoolery."

"Kill me," I reiterated, "and have done with it; and take the ship and sell it, and go back to Scotland and tell them of your bravery in decoying a defenceless boy into your pantry—your council-room of hell—and murdering him. Go on, it will be an honour to you for ever to put an end to me. I would sooner die now innocent than live to roll in wealth as a murderer. You can do your worst; I'm determined."

"There's no certainty that there will be murder."

"Do you suppose," I said, "that I am silly enough to believe the officers and crew will give up their ship except with their lives."

At this point I noticed him give a peculiar look to the two coolies, who immediately sprang upon me and, knocking me down, stuffed a wet cloth into my mouth



to keep me quiet. Then they bound me hand and foot and gagged me.

"I wouldn't like to kill him," I heard Fitzroy say, "if he could be managed alive."

"What's the time?" asked Ned Freely.

"Five to twelve," answered Fitzroy. "Five minutes more. Pass round that bottle, we'll require its help."

One after another they took a deep draught.

"Now, see that all your knives are in order," said Fitzroy. "Give it to them quick—one thrust—and mind where the heart lies. If it's handy, overboard with them; but don't wait for that if it spoils another chance."

"Knives sharp—good," said one of the coolies feeling the sharp point and edge of his blade. "Kill good—good."

"Well, my lads, your watch is on," said Fitzroy. "Now mind, let one stab do; and do not use your pistols as long as you can help it. You may have the half of them dead before the other half knows anything about it."

Thereupon the three dusky fiends opened the door and went silently out, leaving Fitzroy and myself alone.



## CHAPTER VII.

### MUTINY.

WHEN they were gone Fitzroy closed the door and turned to me.

"You see, Lochiel," he said, "what your own obstinacy has brought upon you. When men make up their minds in a business of this kind they can't change them just to suit the crochets of a boy with the heart of a chicken, and I'd advise you to keep quiet while the game's going on."

I shook my head defiantly, scowled and groaned, as the only answer I could make.

"Look here, don't threaten me," he said with sudden fierceness. "Mind where you are, mind what's going on. I saved your life, and you scowl at me as if I was the hangman. But look out, a single wink from me and in two minutes you'd be weltering in your blood like the rest of them. Bear that in mind."

Again I indicated my resentment and defiance.

"Now, listen," he responded, "and when I am done speaking you can 'boo' to your heart's content. As I have said already, we're bound to have this ship if the taking of it cost every life on board. That's

fixed and settled. Lay that bye in a corner of your mind, it may save some 'boos.' It's a scheme about which a moralist might hesitate, but I'm no canting moralist and didn't hesitate. Why should I? The world has been maltreating me since ever I set foot on it, and now I'm going to have a turn at maltreating the world, or such part of it as I can come at. But I made this stipulation, that I shouldn't be asked to take a hand in the actual killing, for I couldn't be sure of my stomach when blood began to flow; so you see there'll be no lives on my head. We decided to strike at the change of watch to-night, and the hour's come and the men are able and ready. Half an hour will do the whole thing, then hey for the jolly buccancers! The watch must just be changing now. Hark! A splash. They're at it, my boy, they're at it!" he burst out excitedly. "The devil help us now, we're in for it. Well done, my hearties! Stab, stab; every stab a dead man, and a step nearer victory!"

He skipped about the apartment, sometimes trampling on my legs, sometimes knocking me in the ribs in the ecstasy of his glee. Each moment his eyes grew wilder and fiercer, till at last they fairly blazed. They were not human at all. They were even worse than a beast's. They were plainly and purely a fiend's.

"They are doing it!" he cried again, as a piercing death-shriek and a cry of "Captain Henderson, Captain Henderson," reached us. "Capital; splendid, my darbies!"

He rushed out, and a moment later I heard someone run up the after companion-way, only to crash head-

long to the bottom again with a sharp cry of pain. Then for a little the silence of the tomb reigned, even my heart being still as I listened. Who had fallen, and why was all so quiet? I was not long held in suspense, for in that instant Fitzroy burst into the room with a shout of exultation that the captain was gone.

"He's done for!" he exclaimed; "hurled neck and crop down the companion-way with a hole in his heart, and the first and second mates were nailed in the first go off as they sat talking on the booby-hatch. One of them's lying up there quite quiet, and the other's overboard. I told you we could do it. When the officers are out of the way the rest's easy, for the men are as frightened as sheep before wolves."

A sudden sickness seized me, I gasped for breath and all about me reeled. I did not swoon, I was perfectly conscious; but an unnameable, indescribable horror took possession of me, which was worse than a hundred deaths. When I had partially shaken it off and regained command of myself I was sweltering in cold perspiration. I dreaded catching a glimpse of the triumphant diabolical face of Fitzroy, but to my great relief I was alone. It was not for long, however; for presently my tormentor returned more maniacally jubilant than ever, with the intelligence that the mutineers were having it all their own way. And there came speedy confirmation of his words, for almost while he spoke there was a sudden tumult of scurrying feet, and a series of terrified shrieks which plainly announced the success of the murderers. Fitzroy

stamped round the room like a person possessed, shouting that the prize was won, and that a few minutes more would see the end of the whole crew, as most of them were penned up in the forecastle, waiting to be quietly shot. I can convey no idea of the fiendish way in which he gloated over the carnage that was going on. Every shriek was like a peal of joyous music to him, positively thrilling him with transports of delight. Nor can I describe the feelings with which I lay there gagged and helpless, listening to his exultations, and the cries of the hapless victims above. The thought of what was taking place drove me nearly mad, and I tugged at my bands till they sank into my flesh.

“Lie quiet, lie quiet!” cried Fitzroy, leaping to and fro over me like a murderous ourang-outang. “Lie quiet, I tell you, or it’ll be the worse for you. A single life is of little account in a general massacre. Put that in your cheek and chew it.”

Just then the cries of a man begging piteously for life came to us, and the next moment a shriek that told what response his pleading had received.

“Splendid! first-rate!” shouted Fitzroy, prancing higher than ever. “Listen! They’re doing so well I must go aloft and have a blink at them,” and he opened the door and rushed out. His going was like the disappearance of the inquisitor from the rack. To lie bound and gagged was bad enough, but to be tortured by the sight of his triumph in the bloody drama that was being enacted was intolerable. Directly he was gone my thoughts reverted to the question of

freeing myself, in order yet, if possible, to render some assistance. Oh, just for a moment of the strength of Samson to burst these bonds! But wrench and roll as I might the bonds held me like fetters of iron. My wrists and ankles, already torn and bleeding, were beginning to swell, and if I couldn't free myself now I certainly could not in a little while hence. So I fought and twisted and rolled, but to no purpose except to give myself additional pain. As I lay panting on the floor I heard the report of firearms, then a second later a crash on the deck right overhead as if a man had fallen from a great height. Presently the door opened and Fitzroy entered.

"The ship's ours! the ship's ours!" he cried, "the last man on deck brought down like a woodcock from the mizzen-rigging. Ah, ha! ah, ha!

The ship is ta'en, the crew is slain,  
Yo ho, the dead men, ho;  
The swabs shall never swab again,  
Yo ho, the dead men, ho:  
With hearts agapē and weasands cut  
They're staring at the moon,  
While Davy Jones is saying grace,  
A grace for every loon.

I turned as he chanted this piece of doggerel and saw a sight that struck a chill to my heart. Standing by the door was one of the coolies, his face and clothes ghastly with blood, and an ugly sharp knife, red and dripping, lashed to a long stick, laid against his shoulder like a pike. There was a grin on the man's face as if he expected an order to begin a piece of very delectable



work, and I made little doubt he had come to despatch me. But I resolved to keep a bold face, and asked Fitzroy what this gory apparition meant.

"Only a trifling attention to you," responded Fitzroy, while a sudden darkness fell upon me. "We must not neglect you while everybody else is receiving favours."

"All right;" I said, "tell him to begin, I hate suspense."

Fitzroy smiled a peculiar feline smile which I have never seen on any face but his.

"Begin," I said again, angry he should trifle with me at such a moment. "Judging from your agent's appearance he would have little compunction about striking the blow."

"Who spoke about striking a blow?" demanded Fitzroy.

"I know of no other purpose for which your executioner would be present," I answered.

"It may sound like heresy, but the intelligence of the world does not centre in that noddle of yours," he said. "There might be, and there is another reason for the presence of my executioner, as you call him; and that same word shows your stout heart, Lochiel. He has come to conduct you upstairs to have a look at some of your old messmates."

"I shall be obliged if he withdraws, then," I said; "for my stomach, like your own, is not too well seasoned to sights of blood. I believe I can go up without his assistance."

"Just as you like," said Fitzroy airily; "but, man,

you appreciate courtesies about as little as any man I ever saw."

Then he told the coolie to retire, and proceeded to unbind me. I lay perfectly still with an outward semblance of gratitude, but I resolved in my heart to kill him just as soon as my hands were at liberty. I felt no compunction about the resolution. If he had had a thousand lives, and I able to take them, I should have gloried in taking every one of them. Whether or not the suspicion of such an intention on my part dawned on him I cannot say, but to my surprise and dismay he only unbound my legs.

"Come along," he said, "and see how neatly the business has been done."

"Aren't you going to unbind my hands?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Daren't," he said; "even this is more than my mates care for. And look here, if you attempt to kick up any rumpus, or make any unsavoury remarks, I'll not be accountable for the consequences."

Saying which he turned and walked away, and I followed.

Never shall I forget the ghastly and horrible scene on which my eyes fell when we gained the deck. Strewn about were several bodies bathed in blood, and the shimmering radiance, as of quicksilver, which the full moon threw on them, made them the more hideously unnatural. The ship had scarce a motion, as if the elements held back in awe at the





terrible tragedy that had been enacted. Whatever wind there was blew gently in our starboard quarter, and the *Nelly Gray*, tranquilly oblivious, bore peacefully along under full sail; but I thought, and think, that hardly a craft had ever roamed the main with such a cargo. I was thoroughly unnerved, and leaned against the bulwark sick and giddy. While in this posture I heard a sudden noise behind me, and turning round found the coolies dragging the carpenter along the deck, from some hiding-place. There was a short scuffle, a sharp cry, a splash, and he was finished like the rest of them.

"Ah ha!" boys, said Fitzroy, stepping forward with the air of an admiral, "so he was hiding. Better make sure there are no more about." But the coolies declared there were none, and Fitzroy returned to regale me with a minute description of the whole proceedings.

"This is what taking a ship means, Lochiel," he said jauntily. "I told you it would be no child's play, and I think you'll acknowledge that the thing has been right cleverly done. A bold plot, well executed, if I should say it. Four of us have taken a ship, or will have taken it presently. Not bad work, I think."

I was too much confounded by all that had happened to make any comments, and he ran on:

"If I had been sure of you, you might have come on deck to see the thing; but I was afraid your compas-

sion might be too much for you. But I can tell you pretty well how it was. You see, the two mates were sitting on the booby-hatch there chattering. A man comes quietly along with a good sharp knife in each hand and cuts them to the heart before they have time to think of what's up; a second man despatches his brace of sailors in another quarter of the deck; and a third one, all equally quick. Then the knives are used like lightning all over. Some one calls for the captain, who is sleeping below, and he rushes up unprepared, to be struck back dead. The cry then is that the officers are killed and the darkies mad, and the men take to their heels to the fore-castle, panic-stricken with the suddenness of the assault, never dreaming that it is a mutiny at all, for you see they got no wind of what was coming. They simply think the savages have suddenly gone mad. A few were found here and there hiding, dragged out and cut down, though there was no time to throw them all overboard. One chap who went up the mizzen-rigging to the cross-jack-yard was brought down with the gun—a splendid shot. I should have said that when the men ran helter-skelter into the fore-castle the place was barricaded and battened down so that they couldn't get out again. And that reminds me that we're not quite finished yet. Come, Lochiel; come, boys, with your guns and let's finish."

The darkies at once ran forward, but I refused to move.



"I'll remain here," I said; "it's not a kind of sport I care for. You can go; I'll wait for you."

"You'll wait for me?" he repeated; "not likely, Lochiel, my boy. I'm going forward, and so are you, or—"

He stopped, as if hesitating to pronounce my doom, and I, still dazed, as if dreaming, turned and followed him across dead bodies and through pools of blood to the forecastle. Before we reached it several shots were fired, and coming up we found the two coolies standing at the entrance swiftly and diabolically shooting down the defenceless men within, as inhuman sportsmen might shoot down game in an inclosure. Ned Freely was standing a little apart with his hands hanging listlessly by his side, and a dejected look in his black face.

"I'm sick of it," he said to me in a half whisper when I was close enough to hear. "I'd give ten thousand worlds that I had died before this night was born. I didn't know what it meant when I agreed to take a hand. Mutinyair an awful game, an awful game."

But Fitzroy had no such feeling. "I'm afraid the light's not good, mates," he sang out to the coolies. "Hold hard a bit; let me inside and I'll hold the lamp for you."

By the increased light thus thrown on the interior of the forecastle I could see about half-a-dozen men lying on their faces as they had fallen. One or two of those alive were shrieking for mercy, the others



were cowering in corners or sitting apathetically with closed eyes waiting for the fatal bullet. Suddenly one of those who were astir sprang forward to Fitzroy, who, like the little coward that he was, ran to cover behind the coolies.

"I ain't going to touch ye! I ain't going to touch ye!" screamed the unfortunate wretch. "No, no, it ain't that at all; only give me my life!"

"Shoot him!" said Fitzroy to one of the coolies. But whether the coolie's own savage heart was touched, or whether he merely preferred his own way, I cannot tell; but he did not obey.

"Give me my life!" continued the man. "I will do anything for you, go anywhere you want, and be your slave—only spare ym life!"

"Shoot him," said Fitzroy again. "If you don't shoot him he'll unnerve you."

Still the coolie did not obey.

"Are ye old women?" hissed Fitzroy in exasperation. "Give me the musket; I'll stop his jabbering."

He snatched the weapon from the coolie and with one shot laid the raving man dead. He handed back the piece and again took his place with the lamp.

"That's what makes me sick," whispered Ned Freely to me. "There ain't no need to kill them men; but I dasn't meddle or I'll get plugged myself."

Sick and giddy and misty as I was with the scene before me, my blood tingled vengefully in my veins at the atrocity of the little fiend Fitzroy.

"Can't you spare these men?" I said. "You are masters of the ship now and can afford to be merciful."

"When we want your counsel we'll ask for it," he answered quickly. "We don't want your interference in the business at all, and you'd better look out for yourself."

At these words, as if they had annihilated all hope, two men came forward from a corner in which they had been crouching, and after breathing a prayer to heaven, covered their faces in their hands and requested to be shot. No sooner was the request out of their mouths than bang went two muskets, and they fell forward—dead. I learned afterwards they were brothers, and had father and mother at home waiting for them.

This finished all that were to be seen; but Fitzroy, fearing any should escape, looked round the place carefully with his lamp. I looked for the body of Dick Stanley, but it was not there so far as I could make out. "Killed on deck," I said to myself, and turned away.

Hardly had I done this when I felt a hand on my shoulder, and glancing round found it was Fitzroy's.

"We're done now," he said lightly, "and naturally enough you'll be anxious to know your fate?"

My blood ran cold at these words, but I strove to keep calm.

"Yes, I would like to know what you are to do with me," I answered.

"Well, that depends greatly on yourself. We would be satisfied with a pledge from you, seeing you're a friend of mine, and if you value your life get down on your knees."

I did as he desired me; but what was my consternation when, at a sign from him, the coolies put a pistol to each of my ears, and Ned Freely one to my forehead. I was afraid to breathe. I thought the little villain had made me get down on my knees only to see my head fly off all the better. For a while there was dead silence. I remained as rigidly still as if I were having my photograph taken, only that I think I winked a good deal more than a photographer would approve. At last the tension on my nerves became so great that my head began to quiver violently of itself, like the head of a man who has the palsy. So violently, indeed, did the shaking become that once the lobe of my left ear struck against the icy muzzle of a pistol; then I started back only to strike the right ear in the same way. The suspense was unbearable.

"If you're going to kill me, kill me!" I exclaimed; "if not, tell me what you want me to do."

"A pledge, Lochiel, a pledge!" said Fitzroy in a tone of devilish triumph.

"What pledge do you want?"

"This: that you swear upon your immortal soul you will never breathe a syllable of all you have heard or seen to anybody outside the present company. That you will be guided in your every word and act by

what we shall dictate; that you will help us to manage this vessel and secure the prize—in a word, that you will do as we want you.”

“And what if I don’t swear?”

“You feel the steel at your ears and forehead—move up your hands, mates, so that he can feel,—those three pistols will scatter your brains to the three winds of heaven. Make haste and choose, for we’re in a hurry.”

“I swear,” I said in affright.

“May the devil seize you if you play false. Let him up, mates, and unbind him;” and they let me up and unbound me.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BITER BIT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the tremendous oaths I had just taken the mutincers carefully kept all weapons out of my reach, as if they were still suspicious of me. Nor if they had them were their suspicions ill-grounded, for I am not quite certain that, had circumstances favoured me, I should have felt any compunction about violating all the solemn pledges I had given; but I was a man of my word on compulsion, for I got no chance to break it. As was perhaps natural, too, they allowed me to take no part in their deliberations. I knew nothing of their intentions until they were made known to me in some order; nor could I feel certain that my life was safe even with the most assiduous servility.

Immediately after setting my hands free they held an earnest consultation, the result of which was that I was ordered to assist in cutting away a boat, and in throwing part of the cargo and provisions overboard. At first I could not guess the reason for this, the more especially as I fancied they might be in need of the boats themselves, and that the cargo was part of the

booty for which they had committed such wholesale murder; but it soon began to dawn on me, and it shed further light on their diabolic foresight. By cutting away a boat and getting rid of part of the cargo, they could, if they fell in with another ship, pose as innocents who had hidden during a terrible mutiny, and come up after all was quiet to find themselves alone on board. Again and again my blood boiled as I thought of their villainy, and I would gleefully have renounced all my vows just for a chance to wreak vengeance on their murderous heads. But I was one against four, they armed and I not, so discretion had to take the place of valour.

We continued to steer w. by n.w. with a favourable wind. I was surprised to see them taking this course, for I knew that by continuing it we could not double the Cape of Good Hope, and so far as I could judge, we had special reasons for avoiding land just at present. But as speculation was unavailing I ceased to bother my head about our course.

As soon as day dawned and I was able to make out the faces of the dead on deck, I began a search for the body of Dick Stanley, but it was nowhere to be seen. Had he jumped overboard in the massacre, preferring the sea to the knives of the murderers? Or, had he been killed and thrown overboard? It mattered little. In either case I should see no more of him, dead or alive. While I was conning over these thoughts in my own mind, for want of anything pleasanter, about

two hours after sun up, Ned Freely, watching his opportunity, came to me and whispered, "Dick Stanley's in the coal-locker; how can we save him?" I told him to keep Dick locked there to give me time to think the matter over, and in the meantime to keep his discovery to himself. I did this hoping that when Fitzroy—who was now unquestionably leader—came to think over the fearful crime of which he was guilty, his conscience might induce him to spare Dick's life. It wore on to noon and still Dick was in the coal-locker. I had quitted the deck, and was sitting in the passage leading to the fore-castle eating a morsel of food, when Ned came to me again with the information that Fitzroy and the two coolies were at the liquor.

"But he don't drink much himself," said Ned, "though the coolies are getting drunk just as fast as they know how."

I thought I saw a plan of deliverance but said nothing, except to tell Ned to keep me informed of all that went on in the captain's cabin. Soon after that I was ordered on deck to mind the wheel, and had not been long there when Fitzroy himself came up. There was a triumphant light in his eye, and the most demoniac grin on his face that I had ever beheld. "Well, Lochiel, how do you think you're getting along?" he said.

"Oh, tolerably for a novice," I said as cheerfully as I could.



"Well said, my boy; that sounds like business. Now, look here; I have a little scheme to break to you. Those infernal Manilla men are as drunk as pigs stuffed with draff. They're murderous brutes; any jury in the world would hang them. They have done for a whole ship's crew, except one fellow I had to shoot down in self-defence, as you saw yourself. Now, I think it would be only a righteous judgment on them if we were to take them in their swinish sleep and heave them overboard. They would do it to us, you may depend on that. Why shouldn't we do it to them? What d'ye think?"

Disgusted and horrified as I was with his perfidy and cruelty, I had reasons for agreeing with him.

"I think they richly deserve it," I answered.

"Well said, my boy, that sounds like a man. I'm glad you're getting up your spunk again. Well, there's no time to be lost; the breeze is fair, let the wheel stand for a minute, and help us up with them."

I was perfectly aware I was acting a double and deceitful part, yet no deceit seemed too black to practise on Fitzroy; nor did any vengeance seem too great to take on his fellow-murderers. If Fitzroy had not been blinded with his success he might have seen that by getting rid of the coolies he was depriving himself of his strongest support; and he might also have suspected me from my ready acquiescence. But, like many crafty men just on the point of success, he was too full of avarice to see anything but the prize he

wanted. We dragged the insensible Manilla men upstairs, and laid them for a little among the bodies on deck.

"I'm just thinking," said Fitzroy, "that it might be a good dodge to cut their weasands and leave them lying with the rest. It would give the business an air of completeness if ever matters should be investigated."

But Ned and I both objected.

"Well, well, so long as they are out of the way it doesn't signify. They'll drown all right. It would serve them right well though to have their throats cut with their own knives. It would be a just sort of retribution. They have done for others, now comes their own turn; 'breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,' as the scripture has it, though you'll observe that murder in self-defence is no murder at all. Here we are then, my hearties," and seizing one of the coolies by the shoulders, he motioned Ned and myself to grasp him by the feet.

"Here we go—once, twice, thrice—off—yo-ho the drunk men, ho. Quick with the other chap so that they may keep each other company."

We watched the men plump into the water. The shock roused them; they struggled for a moment, then caught each other, turned over a time or two, and went down to rise no more.

"The ruling passion, strong in death," said Fitzroy complacently. "They have gone down fighting.

This has been a grim bit of work after all," he said, then looking round the deck, "but it's all over now; and those who did it are gone to their account. Well, well, we must all look to ourselves;" with which consoling reflection he slipped down the companion way to the cabin. When he was gone I approached Ned Freely.

"Ned," I said, "I think you're as sick of this as I am."

"Sicker," said Ned. "You're innocent—I'm guilty, which makes a mighty difference."

"I'm not accusing you," I said, "and I don't want to provoke you into self-accusations, but knowing your heart was turning against this business I thought I'd speak plainly to you. What's to become of us?"

He shook his head.

"Can't you tell me something?" I said.

"Well, if we meet another vessel it's to be a bluff game of innocents, and if we don't, we're headin' for some place where there ain't no jail and gallows; but don't ask me more."

"Only this, since you have protected Dick so far, will you help me to take care of him in future? That is, if Fitzroy orders you to kill him, you'll refuse."

"My hand on it, mate; if I'm ordered to kill him I know where to strike."

"Well, look here," I said, "we may just as well tell Fitzroy now as again that Dick's alive; and what's more, that we mean to keep him alive."

"You do it then, mate, and I'll stand by you."

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright."

Ned went to the wheel, and I crept down to the coal-locker to see how Dick was faring. When I opened the door and looked in he cowered into a corner, but perceiving who his visitor was immediately came forward again. He grasped my hand, wringing it and re-wringing it till I thought he would squeeze the blood out. In the dim light I could see that his eyes were moist and his grisly lip quivering.

"Glad to see ye alive, lad," he said in a choking voice. "This has been a rough job. I've sailed the seas for nigh on to thirty years, but I never had such a trip as this. Are our shipmates all dead?"

"All except the mutineers," I answered, "and only two even of them are alive. But I want to tell you as quickly as possible that you're safe, at any rate for the present. Ned and I understand each other. Are you hungry? have you had anything to eat?"

"Ned gave me some biscuit."

"Well, just stick quietly where you are, either till I come again or you hear me whistle; and if you hear me whistle come to me at once."

His great bony hands nearly crushed my fingers flat, and I closed the door. When I left him I went straight to the cabin, where I found Fitzroy leaning back on a couch with his feet tilted up on the table and a cigar almost as big as himself in his mouth. I entered very

quietly and respectfully, so as not to rouse his suspicions.

"Come in, Lochiel," he said cheerfully when he discovered me. "Make yourself at home. The whole jing-bang's our own now. Henderson's not far off, but I'll warrant he'll not interfere."

I seated myself on the couch as close to him as possible without just giving the impression that I wanted to rub clothes with him.

"Well, how do you think we've done it?" he asked. "By Jove, sir, when we met yon cold morning off the Giant's Causeway we little thought that in a few weeks we should be masters of a ship in the Indian Ocean. The whirligig of fortune is a queer thing, Lochiel; a dashed queer thing."

"It's well to recognise that," I answered. "We have captured a prize we didn't expect; we may lose it in a way we don't expect, too. It's not disposed of yet, and there's many a slip between the cup and the lip."

"Man, I don't like to hear you talking like that. I thought you had got over that humbug. We're sure of our prize. If we're discovered on the high seas we at once surrender, and claim a reward for saving the ship. A boat's been cut off to bamboozle the inquisitive. If we're not discovered, we put ashore at a place I have in my eye where we can dispose of things to suit ourselves. What more would you want? Would you want the corpses to turn into gold?"

All this time my eyes had been surreptitiously

noting whether he had any firearms about his person or within easy reach. But all his pockets seemed flat and empty, and the nearest pistol I could discover was on a shelf several feet away; nor from his manner did he seem to apprehend any present danger. Feeling that my chance was good I got ready to come to business.

"No," I said, "I do not expect dead men to turn to gold; and my remarks were prompted partly by weakness, as you have said, and partly by a little discovery I have made. But I'm glad you are so confident."

I took advantage of his diverted attention to move a little closer to him.

"What discovery have you made?" he asked starting up.

"Only this, that your execution was not quite so complete as you imagined."

"Aye, not complete! Who's alive that should be dead?"

"I don't know that anybody's alive who should be dead," I said; "but Dick Stanley's in the coal-locker."

He rose to his feet with the old devilish gleam in his eyes.

"You're a smart fellow, Lochiel, and I'm glad you have found that out in time."

"I thought you would like to know," I said.

"The man of all others I wanted killed. I hate him. He's a sneak, and would betray us the first chance he got; but wait, I'll soon shut his gab for him."

He reached for the revolver, but I, watching my opportunity, sprang upon, and hurled him on his back on the sofa.

"No," I said, "you shall not touch a hair of Dick's head. If there's to be any more murdering, it's your turn."

"What does this mean, Lochiel?" he gasped. "Treachery—conspiracy—foul play! Come, let me up and don't be a fool. That man 'll betray us I tell you; he's a born villain."

"And what are you?" I said. "An honourable man, I suppose—a gentleman. You little viper, you deserve to be betrayed who have betrayed so many others. Nay, you deserve to have the man you were going to kill come straight in and kill you."

With that I whistled, and in a moment more Dick came trotting into the cabin.

"Dick," I said, "here's a man who wants your life; what's to be done with him?"

"Let me see him," said Dick leaning forward and clutching the now terrified Fitzroy by the nape of the neck. "Bring him out here till we get a look at his phiz."

"What's to be done with ye?" said Dick, landing his man on the floor. "Well, it's purty hard to say. Shootin' or hangin' ain't a patch on what ye deserve. It's too mild to give ye to the sharks. Let me see. I've heard that roast man is good for deep-sea fishin'. How would ye like to frizzle over a slow fire and then go overboard on the point of a big hook?"



Though Fitzroy was pale as death and trembling in every fibre he made a feint of laughing at this.

"Come," he said, "this is carrying a joke too far."

"Well, for a joke, I confess it would be purty far," responded Dick slowly; "but as it ain't no joke, ye see there's a difference. If you consider that killin' all them innocent men was a joke—ye can think this a joke too, and we she'n't quarrel with ye; but let me tell ye we're in dead earnest."

"You know well enough that I had nothing to do with the murdering of the crew," said Fitzroy.

"Well, no, I wasn't aware of that," said Dick. "I was mostly sure I caught a glimpse of ye cavortin' round as happy as a bear superintendin' the slaughterin' of kids. I was mostly sure I seen ye."

"Let me up," said Fitzroy, wriggling to free himself, "or I'll shout on Ned Freely, and then ye'll see what'll happen."

"I'm new to the killin' business," said Dick firmly, "and it ain't a trade I'd choose nat'rilly; but if you open your jaws to holler for anybody, before anybody can reach ye ye'll be beyond hollerin' any more. Just make yerself comfortable where ye are for a minit."

"What do you want to do with me then?" asked Fitzroy, trembling violently.

"Yer mighty impatient. Ain't we considerin'?" said Dick, with the calmness of a judge. "Ye she'n't fare any better by hurryin' our decision, let me tell ye that."

I do not think that Dick had any intention of retaliating by doing any harm to Fitzroy, though he had a strong quiet sense of justice which might carry him to unguessed-of lengths. I was beginning to be sorry for the abject wretch on the floor; besides, I owed him some compassion for having saved my life, for I made little doubt that, bad as he was, he had done me that service.

"We are not acting as avengers, Fitzroy," I said, "and have no desire to maltreat you, only we want all who are alive here now kept alive if possible."

"That's right and reasonable," he whimpered.

"That's a cheering sentiment," I said, "but we want a pledge. You made me swear a whole batch of oaths a short time ago; it is but returning the compliment to make you swear some now. The whirligig of fortune is a strange thing, you know."

"I am ready to swear anything," he said. "Bless me! I was only joking about Dick. I don't understand how you could have taken it so seriously."

"I am glad to hear you had no evil intentions," I said, throwing as much significance as I could into my voice; "but you will admit your joke was a little out of place. When men are suspicious of their own shadows they are apt to misinterpret such pleasantries as yours. But to come to the point. We want you now to swear exactly as you made me swear some time ago, with this difference, that you will take nothing to do with the management of the ship; and that you

abstain from doing any bodily harm to Dick or inciting others to do it. After that I dare say Dick will let you up."

He got on his knees, and with hands clasped and face turned up to heaven like a martyr, swore as I had directed him; then Dick let him up. The sun was already two hours past the meridian when this ceremony was over. Dick was immediately appointed captain, and his first order was to alter the ship's course from N.N.W. to S.S.W. I saw plainly enough that Fitzroy did not relish the change, though he was afraid to make any objection. The sky was still clear and the wind steady, but to provide for contingencies we took in half our canvas. It took us a long time to do this, and when all was taut and trim the evening was well advanced.

It now became a question what to do with the dead bodies. Another day in that sun and we couldn't stand them; yet we wanted them for evidence. After much earnest discussion we decided to let them lie as they were till morning, only throwing a tarpaulin over them for the sake of decency. It was our intention to make for the Cape; and Dick and I resolved, in our own interests as well as in those of justice, to make a clean breast of it.

It was now late in the evening. The sun was descending in a scarlet canopy to the west of us, and Dick was looking steadily at the splendid sight, when all at once he exclaimed, "A sail! a sail!" and excitedly

grasping my arm pointed to it. I saw on the very verge of the horizon the sails of a vessel glowing in the beams of the setting sun. In a moment more darkness fell, and I lost sight of them.





## CHAPTER IX.

### A CHANGE OF QUARTERS.

WITH the first streak of dawn we were on deck on the look-out for the stranger. We had no great hope of discovering her, for when seen the evening before she was making due east, while we were making s.s.w. We were not a little surprised, therefore, to find her tacking about three leagues to the east of us, making in our direction. This led us to examine her minutely, and I noticed that as he scanned her Dick's face did not bear the marks of joy I expected to see in it when we sighted help. Nay, it wore a troubled expression. I was not seaman enough to discriminate closely, and saw nothing particularly suspicious about her. But Dick's observation went farther.

'She's a queer rig, something between a brig and a frigate. I hope she ain't armed,' he said, with some concern. "Any way, instead of making signals or waiting for her, I think we'd better slip as quietly as possible out of her way. Tell ye, I don't like the cut of her jib."

We continued to watch her, and presently it became

evident she had discovered us, for she gave over tacking and bore right down upon us. It was impossible to tell what speed she was making, for she was dead astern, and in a perfectly straight line the eye is a bad gauger; but we saw that she had double our sail on and was hoisting more. Her conduct made us uneasy; yet what were we to do? We were running gently almost under storm canvas, and in our disabled condition it was utterly impossible to set full sail. To give her sea-room, if she wanted to crowd us, was therefore out of the question, and to attempt it without succeeding would only rouse her suspicions. We decided therefore to run just as we were doing, hoping that either we might sight another vessel or that the stranger would deviate and leave us to ourselves. But our concern increased as hour by hour we saw her coming up dead in our course. The *Nelly Gray* was a trim sailer, and under the canvas she bore made good progress, but the increasing distinctness of the stranger told how rapidly she was overhauling us.

"What are we to do?" said Dick. "She ain't following us out of true friendship."

"I don't know," I said, "except to keep on as we're doing and run up our colours, maybe."

"Not just yet," said Dick, "we'll let her fly first."

We lowered the glass with which we were watching her and sat down on the booby-hatch. I saw that Dick was a good deal troubled, though he strove to hide the fact. Sometimes he would look keenly

astern, then bend his eyes on the deck and unconsciously knit his brows. He spoke hardly at all, and I had often to address him twice before he would answer me. After a little he went below, and I took the glass and had a look at the stranger by myself to see if I could make out her nationality, but I couldn't. Presently Dick returned, and taking the glass again looked steadily at her for a moment.

"I can't make out what she is," he said; "but I don't think she's a missionary ship. My opinion is she's after no good, and I hope she's mistaken us, that's all."

She was rapidly diminishing the distance between herself and us, spanking up magnificently with every stitch of canvas rounded in the wind. We walked back and forth watching her. Every minute she was getting larger and larger.

"I wish I got a glisk of her broadside," said Dick. "A ship coming dead in yer tracks like that ye can't tell what size she is nor nothing about her. She comes up pretty, though," he said, with sailor appreciation; "but I don't like the look of her, she's the very image of a Chinese pirate."

Beautiful indeed she was, coming up on us like some swift strong sea-bird that knew not how to be sluggish or ungraceful. On, on she came, deviating neither to the right hand nor to the left, but keeping as fair in our wake as if she had a wager on it. Still we could make out little about her save that she was square-rigged, and built evidently for fleetness. She was a splendid



sight, though I don't think we were quite in the humour for enjoying it.

When she was within perhaps half a league of us she suddenly went off some points.

"There," I said, clutching Dick by the arm, "she's going to leave us. She's discovered her mistake."

"I hope so," said Dick; "but till she goes about or we lose sight of her I she'n't feel easy. A shark don't give up the game when it turns on its back."

The answer showed his superior judgment. After getting out of our course perhaps a quarter of a league she hauled her wind and came on parallel to us. We could see her better now. She was not by any means a large ship, but she was long and narrow, with a suggestion of litheness about her like a greyhound. Slender as she was, she was an ugly customer. It was plain at a glance she was no merchant-ship, so it became us to be very polite and conciliatory. While we were thus standing looking at her she ran up the Portuguese flag.

"I wish we had the British colours to run up," said Dick. "If she's ill-intentioned she'll not pay much attention to the American flag on the high seas. But we must use what we have." And in a moment more the stars and stripes fluttered in the breeze.

No sooner had we displayed our colours than she took in some canvas, and began to question us.

"Name and port?" she asked first.

"*Nelly Gray*, of Boston," we answered.

"Whence, and whither bound?"

"Sumatra and Manilla to New York."

"Cargo?"

"Tobacco and hemp."

"Crew?"

"Thirty."

"Have you had a good voyage?"

"No."

"How not?"

"Had a mutiny."

"A mutiny!" she repeated.

"Yes."

"Many killed?"

"All except four."

"Captain dead?"

"Yes."

"Mate dead?"

"Yes."

"What are you going to do?"

"Make for the Cape."

"Are the mutineers in possession?"

"No."

"Don't believe you. Heave to or will fire."

"Can't heave to."

"Haul down your colours then."

"Our colours, we hope, protect us."

The next moment a shot crashed across our deck, happily, however, without hitting any one.

"Are you prepared to strike now?"

"Yes."

She waited while we did this; then with her guns still upon us gradually edged over. When half way she began her questions again.

"We want to board you; will you let us do it quietly, or shall we have to do it by force?"

"If you spare our lives you can come on board quietly," we answered.

She made no answer to this, but came nearer and nearer.

While this conversation had been going on, Fitzroy implored Dick and myself not to betray him, not to deliver him over as a mutineer.

"I saved your life, Lochiel, twice," he said, piteously clasping my legs. "Will you save mine now?"

"Any man who has saved my life, I'll save his if I can," I answered.

He thanked me obsequiously, then ran and hid in the bath-room.

The stranger took in more sail, then coming close alongside threw out her grappling-irons and made herself fast to the *Nelly Gray*. That done the captain and about a dozen men, with cutlasses drawn and a whole armoury of revolvers bristling in their belts, sprang aboard. Though sailing under the Portuguese flag it was evident at a glance that the captain was an Englishman; but his men seemed to have been picked from every nation under heaven. The captain strode forward, and laying his gleaming sword on Dick's

shoulder demanded his instant surrender, while one of his men did the same to me, and another to Ned Freely.

‘I thought there were four of you?’ said the captain looking round.

“So there are, sir,” said Dick.

“Where’s the other fellow then—hiding, I suppose? Men, go below and search out that white-livered poltroon that’s hiding, and don’t be afraid to prick his hide for him.”

Half a dozen men went below, and in a few minutes returned with Fitzroy, who was looking very pale and crestfallen.

“Bawler, come and take my place,” said the captain, “and if one of them attempts to stir, cut him down.”

It seemed to me that it would be exceedingly agreeable to these men to cut us down, and that the captain’s strict orders were entirely superfluous. A more irredeemably ferocious set I never set eyes on. Naturally they were men of savage countenances, and these had been rendered positively hideous by the scars and hacks all over them. I don’t think any penitentiary in England could match them for downright brutish ugliness. As if to make a deeper impression on us, most of the men had their sleeves rolled up like butchers who were about to begin work. I felt all the time as if a bulldog of vicious temper were standing by me debating in his own mind whether he should tackle my ankle or the calf of my leg.

Meanwhile the captain had ordered all the sails to be taken in both on his own vessel and ours. That and a few other preliminaries attended to, he proceeded to explore the *Nelly Gray*, and as he did so I confess my heart was at my mouth.

"Ha ha!" he said, turning up a tarpaulin; "this is pretty work. By my faith, I think I'll put every mother's son of you to the sword on the spot."

He did not put us to the sword, however, but continued his investigations, throwing up tarpaulin after tarpaulin till all the bodies—a gruesome collection—were exposed. He looked all over them, then turned sharply back to us.

"Where are the mutineers?" he demanded, pacing grimly up to us.

"Gone off in a boat, sir," answered Fitzroy with alacrity. "You see yourself, sir, it's cut away, and they have taken part of the cargo with them too."

"Some of them are overboard, sir," said Dick quietly, when Fitzroy had done speaking.

"Ah, as I expected!" said the captain, with evident relish. "Can't even tell the same story. One says they're off in a boat; another that they're overboard. Putting two and two together I make out they're standing before me in the flesh at this moment. Out with the truth now, or by King Harry it's all up with you."

At these words I thought I felt the blade on my shoulder nudge closer to my neck as if the fingers which grasped it were itching to plunge it into me.

"Bring them into a row, men, so that we can see them well together. Umph! a pretty set of gentlemen to have done such work. Now speak the truth if you want to save your lives."

"I tell you they're off in a boat, sir," whimpered Fitzroy.

"Umph! are they? What have you got to say?" turning to Dick. "And you, Mr. Nigger? and you, sir?" addressing me. "I think by that bit down on your chin, you must still have glimmerings of truth in you. Come now, hurry up, the blades are getting restless on your shoulders I see, a sign they'll soon be at your thrapples."

Dick earnestly repeated what he had said before, and Ned Freely confirmed him, both adding they were themselves innocent.

"And I had no hand in it either," I exclaimed, letting my fear get the better of me.

"Quite so, quite so," said the captain sarcastically. "Of course it was a miraculous happening of which you were helpless spectators—a special dispensation of Providence, as these things are called."

He paced back and forth for a minute with his lip ironically curled, cutting figures in the air with his sword, I suppose to apprise us of the dainty and scientific dissection we might expect. All at once he stopped, and bending his keen black eyes on us spoke again:

"Now, look here," he said. "I'm too old a crow not to distinguish chaff from corn. I've seen mutinies

before and mutineers too. I know exactly what you are." Then turning to his own men, "On board the *Ocean Rover* with them men, and put the liars in irons," and before we had time to utter any protest, or indeed clearly to realize what had been said, we were bundled on board of the strange vessel.

Whether fear gave him courage enough to be obstreperous, or whether it had the opposite effect of paralyzing him, I cannot say, but as Dick and I scrambled to our feet on board the *Ocean Rover*, we heard Fitzroy screaming; and turning round we saw him lying across the side with his guard pricking him vigorously with the point of his sword in the rear. At this comical sight our guards burst into laughter, in which I could not help joining, and the more we laughed the more the man pricked, and the more Fitzroy kicked and yelled. At length he wriggled over and fell on the deck beside us; and immediately we were all hurried below to a sort of guard-room where we were chained in separate corners. Then the ponderous door was slammed and fastened, and we were once more by ourselves. Whether I was getting hardened in misfortune by this time, or whether my exhaustion of mind and body rendered me incapable of fully appreciating my situation, I cannot say, but, instead of being dismayed, I lay back in my irons with a feeling of thankfulness that I had escaped from the bloody *Nelly Gray*. When one is often face to face with death it becomes monotonous to keep up the appropriate feeling of awe and fear.



Since I had been born to be kicked about by Fate, I might as well be in manacles in the belly of a slaver or pirate, or whatever the ship was, as undergoing scourges anywhere else. Fitzroy, however, was not experiencing the same equanimity of mind.

"Oh, dear me, this is terrible," he groaned. "I'm so sore I can't budge; I feel just full of holes. The brutes to take advantage of my helplessness. I'm sure that fellow ran his sword into me at least a foot."

"If he had run it a foot into yer heart it would only be your deserts," said Dick viciously. "Ye killed the others, and now your cussed tricks 'll get us done for."

"I had nothing to do with the killing of the others," answered Fitzroy mendaciously.

"Yes, ye had everything to do with it," chimed in Ned Freely. "You started the thing, and planned it, and put all the bad into our heads. I wish I had cut your throat and thrown ye to the sharks. I wish I had."

"It's a lie, it's a lie," whimpered Fitzroy. "You're just trying to fasten the guilt on me to screen yourself. I never incited anybody. Oh dear, but I'm sore, and just soaking in blood. If it's not stanch'd, I'll die."

"Hope ye may," hissed Ned. "You can't die a minit too soon."

"Oh, you black liar, shut up!" shrieked Fitzroy in a frenzy of rage. "Your face is black, and your heart is blacker. You're a villain and a liar, aye, and a mur-

derer. Lochiel, I saved your life," appealing to me. "They wanted to kill you, and I wouldn't let them. Mind that. This is a foul conspiracy against me. That black hound is lying just straight ahead."

"Make your mind easy," I said. "I don't forget what you have so often told me, that you have saved my life."

This soothed him into quietness, except that at times he broke out into complaints about the many holes that had been made in him. The others fell silent too; and I dropped into a waking dream. I need not bother the reader with all that I dreamed. I was away far from the *Ocean Rover*, among the heather and the grouse and the peewits. The first thing that recalled me was a rat rushing against me, and then I awoke to a livelier sense of my condition. Oh, these galling chains! this hideous hole! No one came near us to see whether we were hungry or thirsty, dead or alive. We could not tell whether it was day or night, both were alike in that blackness. There was nothing to break the gruesome silence but the occasional clank of a chain as some one of us moved.

"Dick," I said, after a long while, "what do you think's to become of us?"

"Don't know, lad," answered Dick, "'pears as if God had forsook us entirely."

Another long silence ensued. From the death-like stillness that reigned I was convinced our captors were still rifling the *Nelly Gray*.

"Have you any idea what hands we have fallen into?" I said, as if I had spoken but a moment before.

"Pirates or slave-dealers; there ain't no doubt of that."

I was about to say something else, but a sudden tramping of feet on the deck and a motion of the ship stopped me.

"They have cut adrift," said Dick.

With that we heard a clatter of feet on stairs, and in a second or two four men with drawn swords and a lantern apiece entered our room.

"Come, mates, we want to take you on deck to see your old ship," they said releasing us.

It was already dark, but that served all the better to show us the *Nelly Gray*, which was a mass of lurid flame. We heard the crackling and the hissing as the masts and rigging caught fire; then after a little the timbers began to fall, and the fire crept down and round the hull. We stood watching her for perhaps twenty minutes; then the captain ordered them to hoist sail on the *Ocean Rover*, and as he did so we were hurried down to our den and our irons.



## CHAPTER X.

### A CONFIDENTIAL TALK WITH THE CAPTAIN.

IT may be imagined it was with no light heart we returned to our chains. We were all silent, as if even the spirit to open our lips had been knocked out of us, as I suppose it had. We had but too much reason to dread what was before us. In all likelihood we should never leave our den alive, and heaven only knew what tortures we might be put to ere death set us free. If I had not felt my position when I came in first I certainly felt it now, doubtless because my mind was becoming more alert and better able to appreciate our appalling plight.

We could now easily make out from the keen swash against the sides of the vessel that we were cutting the water at a pretty lively pace. But whither were we bound? We couldn't tell. So we had to lie there through the long hours the prey of increasing fears. After a seeming eternity had passed two men unbarred our door and threw in a couple of biscuits and a piece of pork to each of us. I ate the biscuits, but the pork smelled so badly that I hurled it to the

farther end of the room. In a minute the rats were squealing and fighting for it. I had cause to regret my hastiness, for before I was offered anything else I could have eaten not only unsavory pork, but raw hide.

We talked intermittently through the tedious darkness, sometimes speculating concerning what was ahead, sometimes heaping anathemas on those who had brought us to such a plight. We had no measure of time, and I doubt not we thought every minute an hour.

Whether it was in search of more pork, or merely from natural inquisitiveness I cannot say, but presently the rats came upon us in squadrons, romping over our legs and bodies, and even licking our faces. In the darkness, and with the noise they made, it seemed to me there must have been thousands of them, though scores would probably be nearer the mark. Ugh! I shudder yet when I think of them, brushing their whiskers against my cheek as they smelled about to see if I were dead yet. In the midst of all this noise and ungrateful attention the door opened, and there was an excited squealing and scurrying of feet among the rats as two men entered. One stood just inside the door, while the other, coming forward, turned his lantern into our faces one by one. When he reached me he stopped and said to his companion, "This is him;" and immediately I was unchained and ordered to march out. I was greatly puzzled to know what they were going to do with me.

"Perhaps they're going to take us out one by one to kill us," I said to myself, "beginning with the youngest and ending with the oldest." I don't know what Fitzroy's ideas were, but he piteously begged me to remember that he had saved my life. One of the men told him savagely "to dry up if he didn't want a dose of cold steel," while the other hustled me outside. The door was immediately shut, and the heavy bolts shot into their places with a loud noise. Then I was grabbed roughly on each side, and instantly expected to feel the cold steel in my body. I was so frightened that for a moment I didn't notice they were rifling my pockets. When I found they were not killing me I stood perfectly still until they had finished their search, then marched with alacrity when they ordered me. I found to my surprise that the morning was already well advanced, and that a stiff breeze was blowing. I was conducted straight to the cabin, where I found the captain placidly pulling at a long Turkish pipe, as if he were the honestest man in the world and had not a care to bother him. He was dressed in stylish frock-coat, and had a very bright scarlet fez on his head.

"These will be articles of clothing he has picked off some of his victims," I thought to myself. He was a handsome man, bordering, I should say, on forty, with a swarthy countenance which showed he was no stranger to the tropics, and piercing black eyes. I thought him very like pictures I had seen of Robert Burns. There was nothing in his appearance to denote the captain of

a slaver, and I felt encouraged a bit at the thought that, so far as looks went, he might be a respectable merchant or professional man ashore. When I was calm enough to glance round his cabin I found it furnished in a way which showed he was a man of taste.

"Have you examined him?" he said to the guards.

"Yes, sir."

"You may go, then."

"I have sent for you," he said, turning to me, "because you are youngest of the set, and are likeliest to tell the truth. Now, I want you to tell me the whole story, item by item, just as the thing occurred; and it is perhaps needless to say that if I catch you prevaricating, it will be so much the worse for you. There, now, sit down and don't be flustered. Take your time; I'm in no hurry this morning. Collect your thoughts and give me a plain, straightforward narrative of the whole business."

I humbly thanked him for his consideration in giving me a chance to speak the truth; and then told him as shortly and clearly as I could the whole tale of the mutiny as the reader has it already. He smoked away quietly without showing a particle of interest until I had finished.

"Umph!" he said then. "You seem to have fallen into bad company; and so that little whelp that hid is responsible for it?"

"I will not say that he alone is responsible for it," I



answered; "only that he had a hand in the planning of it."

"Well, we'll let him ken there's a lith in his neck, as old Auchinleck has it," he said, with as much composure and apparent indifference as if he vaguely contemplated asking Fitzroy to dine with him.

I was at a loss how to act or what to say. I had spoken the truth and nothing but the truth, and yet I feared that I had condemned to death one who had saved my life; but I had no alternative, and my conscience acquitted me.

"Well, now," said the captain, after keeping me a while in painful silence, "I should like to know how you came to fall in with those fellows. You know, when a court of justice is investigating a case it likes to know as much as possible of the prisoner's antecedents. We are equitable here and follow the same plan."

I could not help thinking it a little funny to hear courts of justice commended in such quarters, though I was careful not to give any hint of it. I then told him all about my leaving home, getting into disgrace at college, and my efforts to escape to some place where I might redeem myself. When I mentioned Glasgow University I saw that his face brightened, and that he seemed all at once to waken to a livelier interest in my story. When I had finished he turned his eyes warmly upon me and said, "Dod, man, I was once at Glasgow University myself."

If he had told me he was a brother of my own of whom I had never heard before I could not have been more astonished.

"It's twenty years," he said, laying aside all his indifference of manner, "since I saw the Broomielaw or Argyle Street, but I mind them both well. Umph! ye got into a college row—so did I; and into a row with the police, yon big fellows that used to lay round them with Gaelic oaths—so did I."

He removed his fez. "See that mark?" laying his finger on a scar on the upper part of his forehead. "Well, I carry that about with me as a memento of Glasgow and my student days. Man, man, it's wonderful how you, another Glasgow student, should have happened on the *Ocean Rover*!"

Then he launched out into questions about this professor and that, and would laugh to himself as he recalled some of their peculiarities.

"Man, I was intended for the kirk. Ye nichtna think it," slipping unconsciously into his mother-tongue, "but I was. My father wanted to see me wag my pow in a poopit, as they say in Scotland; and I have studied Divinity, too, though I may have put it to strange uses. Man, man, ye bring back old times to me. It's not likely I'll ever see the old place again, but I haven't forgotten it."

He rose and taking a small key from his pocket, opened a press in which I could see several well-preserved volumes,

"Look at that."

I looked more closely and saw *Burns's Poems*, *The Pirate*, *Chalmers's Sermons*, *Rob Roy*, *Life of John Knox*, *Old Mortality*, *Heart of Midlothian*, and other works by distinguished Scotchmen.

"I had a copy of *Sartor Resartus* and lost it," he said, "but these keep me in company and in mind of the old land."

As he said this his voice had almost a pathetic patriotic ring in it. I could have fallen down and embraced his knees in gratitude for this unexpected kindness; but I restrained myself. He closed the press and put the key in his pocket, and I thought that the closing up of his Scotch friends banished a good deal of the kindly expression from his face.

"I am inclined to believe your story of the mutiny," he said, relighting his pipe; "it tallies with probability, so the question now is what are you to do next?"

"That depends on you, sir," I said, wishing to gain his sympathy by showing dependence on him.

"No, no; since you have told the truth, and with your life in your body, it depends on yourself; and, as a rule, don't place dependence on anybody. If you get into a fix don't blubber about it and cry 'Kismet!' like a heathen Turk; but by hook or by crook get out of your fix, and you'll be surprised how well you can do it. By heaven! sir, the hangman's rope has been about my neck, and I'm here this minute. I think there's a bit of flint in you, too, so don't go back

on it. But this time you're all right. You can remain on board the *Ocean Rover* if you like, and I'll give you a few tips about making a living that the Glasgow professors, poor bodies, never dreamt of; or if that goes against your gorge, I'll set you ashore somewhere and let you shift for yourself."

I thanked him for the good opinion he had been pleased to form of me, as well as for his kind offer, but said that if he would let me ashore at some port—such as Cape Town—where I could get a European vessel, I would much prefer it, as I didn't care for the sea.

"Ah!" he said a little sternly, "if I am to put you ashore it must be where it suits me. I don't call at Cape Town, nor at any other port frequented by European vessels."

I didn't know what answer to make to this speech, for I saw he was not entirely pleased with me for refusing his offer. But he relieved me himself by going on again.

"If you have eyes in your head, as I think you have, you have probably guessed what sort of men we are on board this ship," he said. "We're not missionaries, and I may as well tell you that the ports at which we call are not down on the maps as ports of commerce; and moreover, that when I take stray passengers like yourself and your friends on board, I use my own judgment in regard to their destination, because you see they don't pay any passage-money. Some of them go ashore again, and some of them don't; and those who

go ashore settle for life in the heart of Africa. I get them all cribs."

He smiled significantly as he said this. "I do a little at alchemy," he went on. "I turn what passes through my fingers into gold, or what's as good as gold. Now, as a countryman of my own, to whom I took a liking, I exempt you. But, by the lord Harry, I mustn't be dictated to!"

"I didn't mean to dictate to you, sir," I answered contritely. "I am sorry if I have said anything to give offence."

"Apologies are only wind," he said sharply, "and as we have a good breeze already, I don't want them. I'm many things I shouldn't be, but I'm a Scotchman yet, and you're one, and I'll deal honestly by you. You're at liberty, Mr. Cameron, though I cannot guarantee that you'll get a Glasgow steamer just where I set you down. I honour your old mother, man, or I'd keep you and never ask your leave; but I was once the pride of an old woman myself, and God forbid the curse of a Scottish mother should ever fall on me. Mind, it's for your mother's sake I'm so lenient."

Though his tone was rough, bordering indeed on savageness, I could see that it was scarcely natural, and that the severity of his face was by no means duplicated in his heart.

I was so utterly bewildered that I didn't know what to say, and as the best way out of the fix, said nothing.

"And what about the other fellows?" he asked. "Would you like them put ashore too?"

I answered that I would be very grateful if they also were released, intimating, as modestly as I could, that Fitzroy had saved my life, and that Dick, who was perfectly innocent, had folks at home who would miss him.

"Umph! Saving lives and innocence and folks at home don't, as a rule, weigh much in my scales," said the captain. "However, in this case, we'll see. Meantime, I suppose they wouldn't object to the liberty of the ship?"

I said that I thought not.

He popped his head out at the door.

"Bawler," he called out, "send down for those fellows in the guard-room, I want them brought before me."

"All right, sir."

In a few minutes my three shipmates came marching to the cabin door, each between two armed men. The captain rose and went outside, and no sooner had he done this than Fitzroy fell on his knees imploring for mercy.

"To your feet instantly, sir," thundered the captain, "and if I hear a cheep out of you till I ask you to speak, by my faith you'll be effectually silenced."

The craven wretch rose to his feet, trembling so violently that his teeth almost chattered.

"I have sent for you," said the captain, addressing them collectively, "to tell you that if there was an

ounce of justice going you'd all swing. Gentlemen far less worthy have dangled in a hempen collar; but as I am not in the hanging mood to-day, I'll let you off on condition that you'll not speak to any of my men, or look at a compass, or chart, or anything else about the ship that doesn't concern you. If you do, my men have instructions. Now, go. Bawler, you needn't confine them again, only keep your eye on them."

"Shall I go also, sir?" I asked.

"No, you stay where you are for a little. You have the same privileges on the same conditions—there, now, don't bother yourself thanking me—and report yourself to me every morning at nine o'clock."

Having said this he again began to pull placidly at his pipe as if he had discharged his mind of all thoughts of me. But that was not the case.

"Aye, aye, man!" he said after a while, "and ye've been to Glasgow University, and among the bobbies who lay on with a 'her nain sel will put ye in ta quod whaeffer,' and the red-faced bailies who couldn't see their own toes on a wager. Dod, man, this is the strangest experience I ever had in my life. Sit down, sit down, till we have a crack."

I did sit down, but the crack was all on his side. He told me something about his early life, from which I gathered that unerring wisdom had not marked his early life any more than it had marked my own. In his college days he called himself Donaldson, but now he called himself Maupercieu, because it was more



dignified, I suppose. His adventures would fill a volume far larger than the present, and perhaps more entertaining too, for he had the prime quality of a hero—that of conducting himself handsomely in an emergency.

Every morning punctually at nine o'clock I reported myself according to orders, and few mornings passed that he did not talk with me for a while. One day about a week after we came on board I noticed that his manner was solemn than usual, as if he had something important to tell me; and so he had.

“We’re taking a turn up the Mozambique Channel,” he said, giving me the first inkling of our whereabouts. “To-night you will land. Here’s a letter to a friend of mine—you can’t read it, he can—which will take care of you. As for your friends they must shift for themselves. Go below, now, and don’t let me see yourself or them on deck until you are called for.”

We were kept strict prisoners below all day until it grew dark, when we were solemnly marched on deck, my three companions being bound together, and hustled into a large boat which lay alongside. We were not allowed to ask any questions, nor did the captain once come near us. When all was ready our boat moved off, then the *Ocean Rover* raised anchor, and although the night was tolerably clear we soon lost sight of it.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE ARAB SLAVE CAPTAIN.

I WAS struck with amazement, not unmixed with terror, at this new and ominous situation. Looking round the company I more than half regretted I had not remained on board the *Ocean Rover*, and was forcibly reminded of the poetic axiom that it's better to put up with a bad bargain than fly to perhaps a worse.

The men into whose hands we had fallen this time were all of African birth, except the individual in command, who was unmistakably an Arab; except him, too, they were all naked, save for a girdle round the middle. They were, every one, men of splendid physique, or, perhaps more correctly, of brutish physique, for I never saw such bodies on human beings. They had the animal expression of gorillas, their teeth were filed, and huge ivory rings dangled in their ugly ears. The captain was some grades higher in the scale of development, though even he was far from prepossessing. He wore a long black cloak which enveloped his whole figure, and on his head was a faded

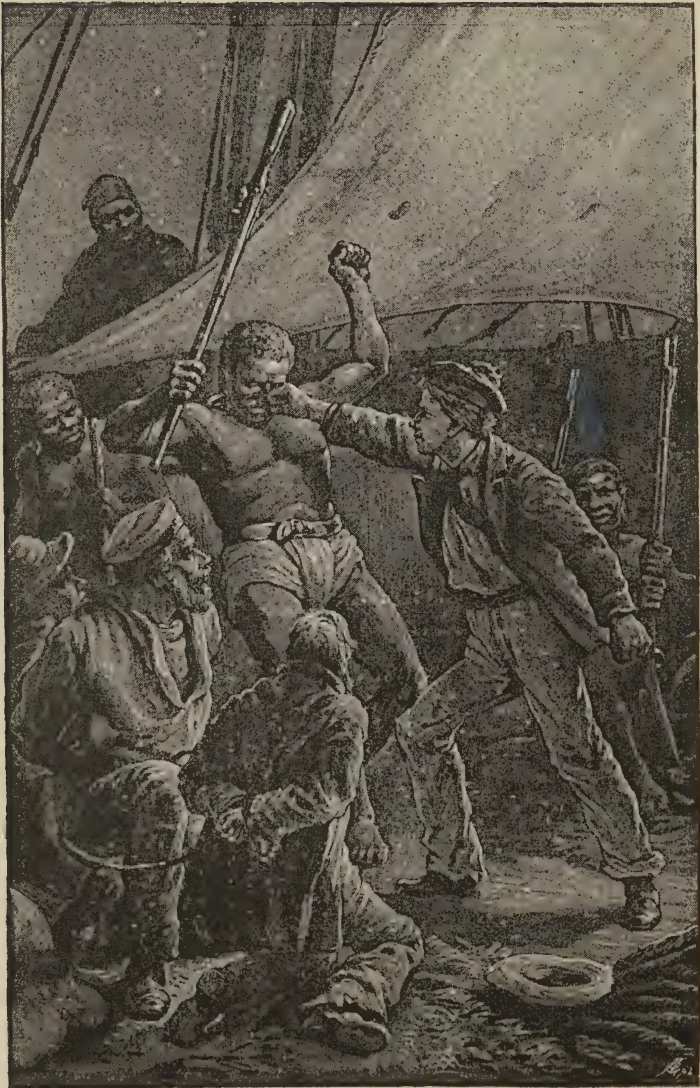
fez. There were about a dozen of them altogether, and they all sat in a silence as grim as death. As usual, Fitzroy was inclined to make a demonstration; but scarcely had he uttered his first imploring moan, when an ebony son of Anak swung his musket in the air and knocked him apparently senseless. The incident caused neither comment nor flutter, and I own my blood ran a trifle chilly as I looked at the prostrate form of my companion. The captain did not even deign to turn his eyes on the victim, but sat wrapped in his cloak gazing skyward with as serene a countenance as if he were having a quiet half hour at astronomy. The boat was a dhow, very deep, and fitted for either oars or a sail. I judged we could not be far from land, though land was nowhere visible, and I could see a good distance in the clear moonlight. I was dying to know where we were, and would have given a good deal for the liberty to put a few questions. For a time I curbed my curiosity, but at length the desire to speak became so overpowering that I could hold my peace no longer. Accordingly, I made my obeisance to the astronomical Arab, and inquired whether he would be pleased to inform me where we were, and whither we were bound.

“What saith the white-livered heretic?” he inquired of his interpreter.

On being told, he replied:

“The son of an infidel dog is in haste to know the evils that are in store for him. Hath he nothing better





to do than to peer into the future, which hideth only sorrow and death?"

Angry that an Arab should speak so insultingly to a white man, I hurled back his epithets in his face. It was the passion of a boy and a fool, I suppose, but I couldn't help it.

"Tell that black Moslem," I said to the interpreter, "that if he calls me son of an infidel dog again, I'll disfigure his countenance for him."

"Tell him you're a member of the Kirk of Scotland," whispered Fitzroy, who had miraculously recovered his senses.

"Hearest thou him prate of his power who is too vile to be spued out of the mouth of a believer," responded the Arab contemptuously. "Lay the creature of evil, the unbeliever, the cut-throat dog beside his companion."

I was more on my guard than Fitzroy had been, so when the same nigger who had knocked him down again swung his musket to do the same to me, I watched my opportunity, and hitting him straight between the eyes, blinded him; then caught his weapon and wrested it from him.

"Doth the son of a Christian sorceress presume to rebel in our presence?" said the Arab, with his small bead-like eyes twinkling viciously upon me. "Ere an hour we shall reward him by giving his flesh to the vultures and his bones to the beasts of the forest, yea, and the sand shall drink his blood. Knock him over the head.



It shall be joy to my heart to see him writhing in his agony."

An Arab's attendants never act without orders, no matter how pressing the necessity; so while he was delivering this flowery little oration I hastily examined my musket, and finding that it was not charged took heart on the theory that the others were empty also, which theory proved to be true. When, therefore, two more niggers rose to carry out the captain's orders, I swung my captured weapon so swiftly round my head, that first I knocked one of the guns that were levelled at me into the ocean, then hit the fellow that held the other such a blow on the pate that he threw his piece away, and rolled to the bottom of the boat shrieking with pain. Nobody rose to take their places, it being, as I have said, a breach of discipline to act without orders; so I had a moment to think. I was now sober enough to recognize the folly of persevering in my single-handed defence, and taking advantage of the lull I drew the slaver captain's letter from my pocket, threw it towards the Arab, and with a profound salaam begged he would read it and let me know whether he were the man to whom it was addressed.

"Bring hither a light," he said, "till we see the Christian's letter."

A tin can full of grease, with a bit of hemp stuck in it for a wick, was lighted and held up to him. He read very deliberately, lifting his eyes, however, every few seconds to see that I was about no mischief.



"Thou speakest true," he said, when he had perused the missive. "It is from my brother, the true believer and Supreme Knight of the Ocean, Captain Mauperceau. He greeteth me, and recommendeth thee to my heart, though, by Mahomet's beard, I strain at the mouthful. Come hither, rebel, and do obeisance; and though thou art worthy of death the honour of Ali Kubla shall guard thee like a tower of strength."

I concluded that the best policy was to comply, and stepping briskly forward I laid the musket reverently at his feet, then kneeled myself.

"Pardon me, great lord," I said; "the wisdom of age abideth not in youth. I am guilty, and at thy mercy."

The interpreter had also come forward, but the Arab waved him away. The wily slave-dealer had no need of an interpreter, having been merely feigning ignorance of English, which he understood well enough, though he spoke it strangely and with the flowery rhetoric of Araby. I afterwards learned that in his first contact with strangers he always employed an interpreter, but whether from motives of policy or only from vanity no one could tell.

"That better becometh thee," he said, with ill-concealed gratification at having a Christian kneeling at his feet. "The Supreme Knight speaketh not of what thou art, only requesteth that thou be saved alive, and that thou be not sold into slavery. Now speak, I pray thee, and tell us thy business."

What would I not have given to know what was in that mystic Arabic letter which was proving so curious a hinge in my fate? It was of the utmost importance that my statements should tally with its statements; and I must therefore try and find out what these were.

"Surely," I said, "the Supreme Knight of the Ocean hath enlightened my lord, and hath not left it to me."

"Truly he hath not. He speaketh of thee as a brother, and seeketh my protection for thee. More enlightenment he doth not give."

"Doubtless an oversight on the part of my great brother," I answered; "or, perhaps, he had not time to set down my business. But know, my lord, that I come from a far country as the agent of a mighty prince to seek gold and ivory."

"Wherefore camest thou with only dogs of slaves, then?" he said, pointing to my companions. "And in the whole course of my life nothing so strange hath happened to me as to see thee come on the ship which is as the lion or the leopard in fierceness, and knoweth not mercy."

For a little I was completely nonplussed. He was watching me, I thought, suspiciously, and the rascal might only be trying me. However, as I had made a start I must push ahead. So praying for a fertile invention I went boldly on.

"The letter which my lord holdeth in his hand is indeed grievously defective," I answered, "when it hath not stated that the mighty prince, my master,

and Captain Maupercieu are as brothers whose lives are one. There is no enmity between them, but the one befriendeth the other and seeketh for opportunity to show his love. Thus it is that I came on the ship which is as the lion and the leopard in fierceness; thus it is also that I have been graciously commended to my lord, and have come hither without a band of warriors, my master the prince well knowing I should not lack protection. As for these dogs they are my private property, and are constantly in attendance on my person."

"Thy private property!" he re-echoed. "The Supreme Knight hath not given me to understand that I am to forego my legitimate profit in the bodies of these dogs. They were delivered chained into my hands for barter. The law decreeth they are mine to do with them what seemeth to me good, either to slay them or preserve them alive, to sell them into bondage, or keep them for attendance on myself. Thus decreeth the law. Did the Supreme Knight tell thee he had inscribed their names on the scroll for other purposes?"

"I understood he had given my lord a secret token whose slaves they are," I said.

"That he hath not," he returned. "And it seemeth not good to me to forego my legitimate profit on the word of an alien and stranger. But let not that kill hope in thee, for doubtless thou hast wherewith to redeem them, and then the scroll shall be delivered to thee; and through all the land of Africa, from the Red

Sea and the holy Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, even from Ulula to the place where the swift sea rusheth like a battalion of horsemen on the shores of Mozambique, yea westward where the sun goeth down into the Great Sea where there be strange nations, there shall no man molest thee save them who are impious and out of the faith."

Here was a pretty pickle. The wretch would have money, and I had not a cent. If I could not extricate my companions I might as well be sold into slavery with them, for without their assistance there was scant hope of escape. His quick eye saw I was troubled.

"Wherefore art thou sad?" he demanded. "Are there not riches in abundance in the white man's country? Doth the seeker for gold and ivory, the emissary of a mighty prince, not bring enough to purchase three vile dogs, and one of them with the colour of the sun in his face?"

"My lord's questions show enlightenment and wisdom," I answered. "There are treasuries of riches in the white man's country; but as my mission is to increase them, and my master's might hath gained the favour of the Supreme Knight of the Ocean for me, I came unencumbered. He who hath the power of the sword may travel without money-bag."

A cynical smile came into his face, which showed the effect of my speech.

"Thou art without money, then," he said with a galling snort of contempt; "and the sword in which

thou trustest stretcheth not to the end of the world. The law decreeth the slaves are mine, therefore will I do with them what seemeth good to me."

"My lord," I answered, with as much British dignity as I could assume, "it is true, as you say, I am here without money for the reasons already given, but not without friends to avenge my wrongs. The sword stretches when the arm is long, and the prince, my master, and Captain Maupercieu have long arms, as their enemies know. I am an emissary; he who robbeth me robbeth my master."

I saw that he was amazed at my boldness, and this gave me courage.

"If the Supreme Knight, my master's brother and mine, had not thrown himself confidently on the integrity of my lord," I went on, "he would assuredly have given instructions concerning these slaves, and told thee they were mine own private property."

"My brother hath been remiss," he said impatiently; "but why waste words? The law decreeth the slaves are mine, and one must meditate on the righteousness of his cause ere he break the law."

"Much reverence you have for the law, you tawny blackguard," I said to myself. But I took care not to let him see my humour; so instead of resenting his words I made my obeisance and retired to the place whence I had come, judging it better, like a prudent courtier, not to press my cause too hastily.

At once I noticed that a great change had come over

the men in their demeanour towards me. They made way for me with lowered muskets and a sinking of the head, which I took to be an African substitute for a salute. Whatever other effect my talk with the Arab might have, it clearly imbued them with a sense of my importance. Even this was something gained.

Hitherto we had been running W.N.W., now we changed to almost due west. In the somewhat misty light I could descry a dim pencil line on the very verge of the horizon, but whether a low cloud or land I could not make out. I gazed and gazed and it seemed to grow, not in definiteness but in vague dimensions; but as the moon was fast withdrawing, its increasing size gave no clearer evidence of what it was. But I could not help thinking of it as land, and wondering what was in store for us in its far unknown interior. I had a thousand conflicting emotions; most of them painful, which it is unnecessary to set down here, because it is my adventures rather than my complicated personal feelings for which the reader will look.

The wind had forsaken us, and the sail been taken in some time ago. It was still, so still that a match burned without a flicker; and the muffled beat of the oars in the water instead of dispelling the silence only made it more awfully gruesome. Not a sound in the air, nor in the water around us. The oars rose and fell, rose and fell, black and portentous in the fading light like the slow and ominous wings of some huge condor. Perhaps never was there a more funereal boat on the



water than that sulky dhow with its sable oarsmen and its grim silent company. Presently the sky above and the water below blackened, and it might have seemed we were bidding good-bye to hope and light at the same time. I sat close beside my companions, and in the darkness Dick Stanley managed to grasp my hand by way of thanking me for what I had done; and Fitzroy, who had not stirred all this time, furtively squeezed my leg.

How long we ran in that silent funereal way I know not—perhaps two hours, perhaps only half an hour; for a man in an agony of suspense is the worst time-piece in the world. All at once my heart leaped to my mouth as I saw something blacker than the night stretch over us. In a second I recognized that it was a beetling crag. The oars never stopped. On, on with the same muffled blood-curdling beat straight under the cliff; and presently with a slight acceleration of speed we swept into a subterranean passage black as the tomb itself. The silence gave place to a confusion of sounds. I fancied I heard deep groaning away among the ghostly interior recesses. The flood below us heaved and swelled with a buoyancy that was perfectly frightful. I gasped for breath. The splash of the oars sounded very loud for an instant, then all at once stopped. A man struck a match and the grease-can was again lighted. We were in a great wide cavern with arched roof and slimy walls. Again the oars were let out and we glided forward, now rising as



if we should be crushed against the roof, now sinking as if giddily falling to the nether regions. On we went, now high, now low, with no more speech than corpses. Then the passage became suddenly narrower; and presently we came to an angle where two men rose and caught an iron chain that dangled like a gallows-rope over the side. The boat was drawn in, and I perceived rude steps cut in the rock to the height of perhaps twelve feet above us. We got out and clambered up these steps, which was a difficult feat, for they were slippery. Then we came to a level platform, then ascended a broad wooden ladder perhaps ten feet more, and pushing on through slimy corridors at length reached a spacious apartment in which glowed the embers of a huge fire.





## CHAPTER XII.

### A CHAMBER OF HORRORS.

AT first the light was so dim that I could not make out how this strange subterranean apartment was furnished, or whether furnished at all; but presently half a dozen more of the grease cans were lighted and fastened into niches in the wall. As these flared up they revealed, perhaps, the most horrible sight I had ever looked on. In shape the room was oblong, with a roof at least thirty feet high and black smooth walls, except where a grayish layer of about two feet in depth came in. This gray strip ran round the whole apartment about eight feet from the ground, and had thirty-six cells in it, and in each was stuck a human head. Imagination cannot conceive how awful the spectacle was. The wild and glassy eyes, dilated to twice their natural size, were fixed in a stare that froze the blood, the lips fiercely drawn back revealing the truculent teeth clenched as if in a passion of anger, while the features were in contortions of pain as if the soul had fled in desperate agony. I looked round the hideous circle in a sort of

awful fascination, trembling in every fibre yet utterly unable to withdraw my eyes. Round they crept from head to head, each more terrible than the last, till they came to the head of a white man. This was right opposite the door or entrance, and seemed from its position to be considered the chief trophy of the lot. I shook as if I had the ague, and with an eerie feeling which it would be foolishness to attempt putting into words, wondered how my head would look there glaring out of its cell. I didn't know what to think of the situation. I thought it quite possible that I should be murdered in there; others had been, so might I.

Above the human heads were some heads of animals—lions, leopards, and such like; but these were too commonplace to keep my attention for more than a second. Except for these ornaments the apartment was as bare as the sea had left it.

The Arab captain had thrown aside his cloak and was walking about the room with the complacent air of an English gentleman in his picture gallery. Without his cloak and in the new surroundings he looked more repulsive than ever. He was not tall, nor was he at all stoutly built, indeed he was decidedly cadaverous; but he had the litheness and energy of the wild cat in all his movements as well as its untamable ferocity of expression. His eye of itself would tell you there was not a particle of humanity in his composition, and that once helplessly in his power you

need expect no mercy. My old friend of the *Ocean Rover* was a picture of benevolence and magnanimity in comparison with this man. While Captain Maupeceau was cutting a throat in the way of business you could fancy him doing it with regret; but this Arabian gentleman was an artist pure and simple, with the keenest relish of cruelty and slaughter for their own sakes. He would not kill in the frenzy of passion, nor because a life stood in his way, but solely because he liked it. If there was an incongruous thing in the world it was imagining him doing a kindly deed.

He walked several times round the room, eyeing the ghastly visages on the wall with the utmost delight; then coming forward to me he said:

"Wherefore is the emissary of the mighty prince and brother of the Supreme Knight so bewildered and sad? Doth his soul not delight in justice?"

"When he sees it," I answered curtly, for I could not find it in my heart to flatter him even if my life depended on it.

"Thou seest it," he answered quickly. "It is before thine eyes, and thou art not blind. These are the heads of dogs who offended against the law. Doth the white man not think it justice to punish guilt?"

I felt something choking me while he spoke. My fingers tingled to clutch his throat; my nails sank into the palms of my hands; I bit my lip till it bled.

"Thy eyes sparkle," he said. "It giveth thee plea-

sure to behold the heads of these dogs—the scorn of all men, the abomination of the world, the thrice cursed breakers of our holy law. Their heads are there for a memorial, their carcasses the beasts of prey have devoured.”

I turned on my heel in sheer loathing and went and sat down on the stone floor in a corner.

“Faileth the soul of the Christian?” he said with a mocking leer, addressing himself partly to me partly to his own followers. “Gold and ivory are not for the heart that fainteth at seeing the heads of malefactors.”

There was a contempt and an impertinence in his tone which aggravated me almost to madness. I sat eyeing him for a little with my pulses going like steam boilers and a great thumping in my breast. Fortunately, however, I managed to master my passion and to assume the tone, if not the spirit, of humble deference.

“My lord’s servant hath much to think of and to plan,” I answered, “and desireth, if it be my lord’s pleasure, a little time to meditate.”

“Yea, and thou shalt have it,” he replied with a laugh. “This is as good a place for meditation as the tomb. Thinkest thou these heads on the wall have time to meditate? They do naught else. From the rising of the sun to its going down, yea and when the moon and stars shine they meditate. Thou shalt assuredly have time to meditate.”

He turned and walked to the opposite end of the

room, where, pushing aside a curtain of leopard skin, he disappeared into another apartment followed by his interpreter.

"You atrocious old leather-face, I'll kick you into jelly," I caught myself saying.

When they were out of sight I heard the sound of laughter as if they were making sport of me, and I was just on the point of following to carry out my threat of kicking Ali Kubla when Fitzroy, who was squatted beside me, whispered:

"This is the worst fix we've been in yet, old boy."

"Fix," I answered savagely. "I'll fix the old fiend. I'll put his head where the white man's is there. If I die for it, I'll kill him."

"Ye have done well, lad," said Dick Stanley interrupting me. "If we have a chance left in this world it's you. Don't undo what ye have done. Ye have acted splendid, and may win the game if ye have patience and don't get riled. When ye were talking about money I wanted a chance to speak to you, but I couldn't get. There's forty dollars in gold under my belt, and an old silver watch in my pocket. They're yours, lad, do with them what ye like; and better take them now, for we mightn't get a chance again."

"By gum, a good idea," said Ned Freely. "There's a hundred and twenty under mine. Here, take it, and ye can win yet."

"Well done, well done! devilish good, devilish good!" exclaimed Fitzroy, almost leaping in the air with glee.



"Look here, you black chap over there," he called out to one of the guards, "go and tell that Mahomedan master of yours we're British gentlemen with lots of tin, and that we're not going to stand this sort of thing, you know. Now, like a good fellow, toddle."

It was fortunate for us that the nigger did not understand a syllable of English.

"Fitzroy," I hissed, "if you don't hold your tongue I'll brain you on the spot. One would think you might have learned a little wit by this time."

"Gosh bless me, Lochiel, I couldn't help it," he replied; "I declare to goodness I couldn't help it. Now's your chance, Lochiel, to troke<sup>1</sup> with that Arabian son of a gun. Gosh, I'm glad you fellows had that money, it's just our salvation."

Whether it should prove our salvation or not was not yet quite clear, but it put us all in better spirits. As the guards were evidently becoming suspicious of us we had to suspend our intercourse, but not before I managed to pocket Dick Stanley's forty dollars and his old silver watch (which had a marvellous family likeness to Captain Cuttle's), as well as Ned Freely's hundred and twenty and some small silver coin in addition.

Taking advantage of my greater liberty I rose and walked about the room to meditate. I had paced thus for perhaps ten minutes, and had succeeded in getting my head pretty full of schemes, when the

<sup>1</sup> Deal,



interpreter came with a message that Ali Kubla wished to see me. I went in and found him squatted on the floor on a jackal's skin pegging away at a banquet of dried meat, wild honey, and some purplish kind of berry about the size of a gooseberry. When I entered his mouth was so full that I had to stand a minute before he could speak to me; then he invited me to squat and have something to eat. I thanked him humbly and at once began, for I was desperately hungry, not having tasted food for nearly twenty hours. The meat had a hard, dry, spicy flavour which was not at all disagreeable, and the berries being juicy and acid served admirably to quench our thirst. I learned afterwards that the meat was cured by simply letting it dry in the sun and rubbing it with the juice of an aromatic plant which is found in the interior, and justly prized not only for its flavour but also for its tonic properties. I was assured by a man who had himself made the experiment that it was possible to go for an indefinite period without food or injury to the constitution by simply sucking this plant. He told me also that he was going to make up an elixir from it that would do away with the necessity of solid food, but I have not heard yet that he has succeeded. The plant is scarce and guarded with extreme jealousy by the natives, who look on it as a special favour from their gods. It is confined to a certain district and is called "nmakim" or life spirit.

I ate heartily, taking substantial mouthfuls of the meat and crushing half a dozen berries into my mouth at once, not forgetting at intervals to gulp down the honey, dead bees and all. But my efforts were child's play compared with those of the Arab and his interpreter. They were truly wondrous eaters. First they would tear off about four ounces of the meat, spread honey on it an inch thick with their fingers (which hadn't been washed for months, judging by their appearance), then crush the whole thing into their mouths so tightly they could scarcely work their jaws, then before that was well down in would go a great fistful of berries. When I felt that I had taken a fairly good meal I stopped.

"Wherefore stoppeth the white man?" asked the Arab in surprise. "Is it not the white man's custom to eat while a morsel remaineth? Eat and make thy belly glad."

Not to give offence I began again, and made a show of keeping at it till every particle of food set before us was consumed. I never ate so much in my life, and I vowed never to do it again, for I was ill for a week after it.

Towards the end of the repast I took occasion to have a glance at the room. In shape it was precisely like the outer one, only not so large. There were no decorations of any sort, nor was there any furniture, save half a dozen skins of wild animals on which the Arab and his interpreter sometimes slept. When the

last fragments had been eaten up we lay at full length on rugs apiece, while the guards flung out some food to my companions, chiefly earth and dead bees, I was afterwards told by Fitzroy.

After a while the Arab lighted his pipe; and as I didn't smoke I got up and walked round the premises, occupying myself with thoughts of the future. When he had finished his smoke he called me to him and began again to talk of my slaves, as my companions were now called.

"The law decreeth that these dogs are mine," he began, bending his eyes very sharply upon me. "Yet, as I have already told thee, to show my love for thee and those who sent thee, I will permit thee to redeem them."

It was quite clear to me that some new idea had struck him regarding the business, and that he was only, as the saying is, pumping me now.

"My lord hath the gracious consideration of one who receiveth the emissary of a friend and the brother of an ally," I answered humbly and vaguely, for I doubted the policy of telling him of my windfall.

Then we looked at each other for a little, disappointment and irritation being plainly visible in his countenance.

"We are but wasting words," he said at length. "Wilt thou redeem them?"

"How far is my lord at present from his destination?" I asked.

"Seven days' journey," he answered in surprise.

"Then," I said, drawing myself up with an air of great assurance, "if my lord will not let my personal attendants go free, in three days from our arrival at the barracoon I will place their price in his hand."

"And how wilt thou get the price?"

"I am the agent of a great prince," I answered with an assumption of ambassadorial airs, "and I have come to my lord commended by the most potent Knight, who commandeth the ship which is as the lion or the leopard in fierceness. I have knowledge whereof I must not speak, gained in a manner known only to the prince, my master, Captain Maupercieu, and myself. He who gave it is sleeping his long sleep. I crave nothing but arms and ammunition, which I had a token my lord would furnish. As for the slaves, if my lord *will* keep them, I ask them not till they be redeemed to the uttermost farthing."

"Thou need'st not," he answered with a grim chuckle.

"I will not," I returned, standing more erect and planting myself firmly on my two feet. "What the white man sayeth, that will he do."

"Thy words are bold though thy face is as a girl's," he said with something very like a sneer. "I will meditate on what thou hast said. We go hence at dawn. And now get thee from my presence, for business cometh and I would be alone."

This was a rather curt and unceremonious dismissal

after my high feats of diplomacy. But I swallowed my resentment, and having bowed elaborately sidled out as quickly as I could to my friends.

The business he expected was not long in announcing itself. Very soon after I left him we heard the plashing of oars in the cave, and a few minutes later the muttering of voices, then the ringing of feet on the stony platform; and a second later a body of fifteen slaves, tied together in threes, entered guarded by armed men as we had been ourselves. It made my heart sore to see the wretched creatures, stark naked, their feet and backs hacked and bleeding from accidents and the lash. Scarcely one of them but was limping, and a few were dragged bodily along by their companions. It was my first sight of slaves and it was not a pleasant one. I had seen grief, and terror, and agony before, separately and together; but none of these, nor all combined, expressed what I looked on now. They were like condemned men. Their faces showed not only that they were suffering pain, but that they were utterly without hope. Toil and torture was all they had to look forward to. When they turned their rolling, appealing eyes to me I could have wept in pity; and if I had had money enough I am sure I should have bought and liberated them on the spot.

Presently Ali Kubla came forth from the inner room, and after addressing a few words to the man in charge—who was an Arab fiend like himself—pro-

ceeded to examine the slaves as a drover would a lot of cattle. When the examination was over they were taken outside again and washed, and the poor fellows suffered the most exquisite torture from the salt water on their raw wounds. Then they were marched back and huddled into a corner of the large outer room, where they got some dried meat and dirty honey. Meantime the lieutenant—for such he proved to be—and the guards had some food, and when they were done Ali Kubla sent out to see whether day had yet dawned. The man returned with the poetic answer that “the light was gilding the water and the darkness had fled,” and forthwith we were all ordered to get ready for starting.





## CHAPTER XIII.

### I HAVE A ROW WITH ALI KUBLA.

THE slaves, including my three friends, were tied in couples, Fitzroy and Dick together, since they were white, and Ned Freely to a limping little Hottentot, whom he was expected to keep to his paces by dragging him along. I had my liberty as before, though I noticed that the guards hovered suspiciously about me, from which I inferred that they had received special instructions to watch me. We wound out, a woebegone procession, through the labyrinthine corridors, chiselled by the sea in the long past ages, to the spot at which we had landed. The slaves were driven helter-skelter into the two dhows like so many cattle, the guards freely using the butt-ends of their muskets to urge them on. By a manœuvre which I did not detect at the moment my friends and I were separated, I suppose to keep us from communicating with one another. When all was ready Ali Kubla sprang in beside me and gave the order to start. The grease-cans were kept burning till we reached the cave's mouth, then blown out.



Never shall I forget that emergence from night into day. Dawn was just breaking in all its oriental glory upon the translucent waters of the Indian Ocean. Far outward as the eye could reach rolled the rosy morning light, while from behind came the sensuous fragrances of tropical flowers and shrubs. The line of the poet flashed upon me where he says that, "all save the spirit of man is divine." Divine that effulgent summer morning assuredly was. Peace and light everywhere except in the heart of man. I could scarcely realize that in that dawn, as of a day in Paradise, I had my lot with traffickers in human flesh, with the human flesh in which they were trafficking. I looked from the inanimate creation, passionately glad in the auroral radiance which seemed to stream fresh from the hand of God, to the animate, that bore on its face in the midst of all that light and buoyancy the gloom of hell, and my heart smote me that I bore a human form. Could I not fly away to where that glorious orb, Heaven's own vicegerent, was rising in primal splendour and purity, and by plunging into the crystal flood leave all human grossness like scum on the surface? Were there no secret isles in that fair east where one could go and be at peace? It looked kind enough under those rosy skies for such points of bliss. Amid all the hours and days of my life, that moment of emerging from the cavernous bowels of the earth to that lucid oriental dawn stands out pre-eminent and alone. There are moments in a man's life, not

always in an outward sense, nor perhaps in an inward, the most important, that stamp themselves upon the soul as indelibly as the die upon the coin. Such was that moment to me. I had seen the sun rise on those waters before, and I saw it rise on them afterwards; but when I lie awake and dream of my past life and think of the Orient, that peaceful morning with the advancing light rolling on the sea is always the picture that comes to me. And I love to think of it, because it was a point of light between two great blacknesses. I think, however, I was the only one of the company who was at all struck with it. The slaves were too much occupied with their own wretchedness, the Arabs with their avarice.

When we had rowed along the coast for a league or so we came to a creek which I soon discovered was the mouth of a river. Into this we turned, and I felt queer as I thought we were actually entering Africa. It was not a swift stream, so that our progress was tolerably rapid. About two miles inland the river curved sharply, and we lost sight of the ocean. Heaven only knew what should take place before we saw it again, if ever we saw it again! Towards noon we got into dense forests. On either side, from the very edge of the water, rose a sheer wall of foliage. It got fearfully hot, too, and to make matters worse, steam was rising from the land on both sides in clouds. Ali Kubla put up a vast umbrella of palm leaves, which he invited me to share with him. For a while I felt

delightfully cool under it, just as one feels cool for a little in the second room of a Turkish bath after coming out of the inner. But I soon got as hot as ever. It was not that I simply perspired, but that I felt the flesh frizzling on my bones. Nay, I fancied sometimes I heard myself hissing as a piece of meat does before a strong fire.

I had no handkerchief to keep the streaming perspiration out of my eyes, and had to use my coat-tails, which speedily became soaked.

"A little more of this sort of thing," I said to myself, "and all the world will have to show for me will be a spot of grease."

Anything like the heat and closeness of that river I never felt. We had no thermometer, but judging by my feeling it must have been about 175° Fahrenheit in the shade. My companions had no covering or awning of any sort, and how they escaped sunstroke is a mystery. True, in the afternoon Fitzroy turned his coat up over his head; but the worst of the heat was over before it struck him to do that.

All day we continued to toil against the stream, which was getting swifter and swifter the farther we receded from the ocean. There were two sets of rowers, who changed places every hour. In this way we were able to maintain a good uniform rate of speed. How the poor rowers stood it I can't make out. One would have sworn they were made of tallow, with a mere coating of black-lead outside, so copiously did

they bubble into springs. Sometimes when the perspiration was getting into eyes and ears and mouth at the same time, they would shake themselves like dogs that have come out of the water, and the large salt drops would plash in our faces. Very often, just before taking their turn at the oars, they would plunge headforemost into the river and swim about for a moment, then take their seat on the benches dripping as they had come up. I was surprised to note that of these antics Ali Kubla did not take the slightest notice; not even when a shower of perspiration struck him in the face did he once turn his eyes upon the offenders, or show the least sign of annoyance. To myself I confess these showers were anything but pleasant or refreshing. Ali Kubla, however, was clearly absent-minded, and it struck me that while he was courteously affording me the shelter of his umbrella he was quietly planning how to get rid of me.

By and by we took some more dried meat, honey, and berries, and although I was able to eat very little meat, I found the berries marvellously refreshing. I felt cool and strong after them; nay, I believe I even felt a trifle frisky. That is, if my friends and I had been alone and at liberty I should probably have turned a few somersaults by way of diversion. But the heat soon overcame my frisky feeling, and I was glad to sit quietly under the wide-spreading palm leaves of the Arab.

Late in the afternoon I detected a boom like a wild

surf on a rocky coast. It was far and faint, but as we proceeded it grew louder and louder.

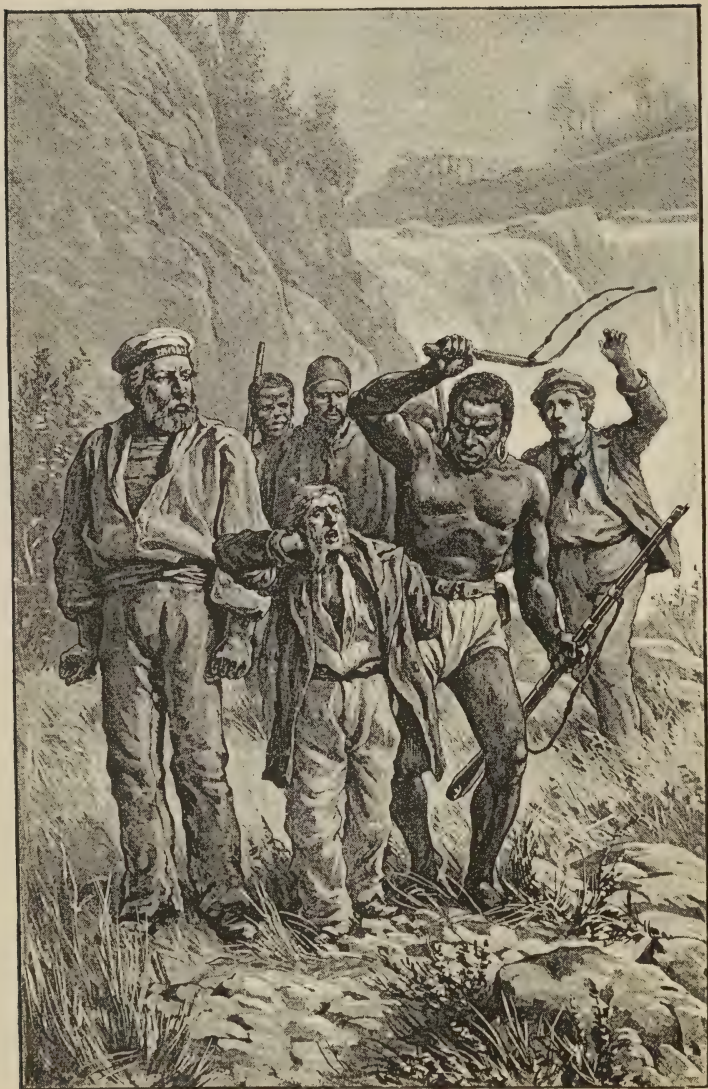
“Water-jump,” said Ali Kubla laconically, noticing that I was listening; and sure enough almost immediately I saw a white, gauzy cloud hanging in the sky, and knew it was the spray from some waterfall. Clear and beautiful it shimmered like a mass of pearls in the fervid sun; and louder and ever louder grew the roar of the cataract. Presently masses of foam came floating past, and soon afterwards the black deep waters were convulsed into boiling eddies as we drew near to the whirlpools under the falls. Though the forest was still dense it no longer dipped its leaves into the water. The banks became steep and rocky, and I could not exactly see what we were to do with our boats. But presently we came to a spot where there was a sort of natural opening in the mural steeps. Here we got ashore.

“The white man’s soul shall presently be made glad,” said the Arab to me with a gleam which showed that he at least anticipated some good sport. “The lash shall be laid on the backs of these dogs. Thou shalt see the blood trickle in streams, and shalt hear them howl louder than the beasts of the forest. Ere these boats are over the water-jump thou shalt see sport.”

I saw the light in his eye and I trembled for his victims. They were yoked together in pairs like horses and set to the boats. The guards, with loaded muskets, were ready for contingencies, and four drivers









got out long twisted thongs with knots on them like the knout, and handles about a foot and a half long. Their hardness and the purple stains on them showed they had often been used. The poor cringing slaves understood these arrangements and instantly began to pull at the ropes. Dick Stanley and Fitzroy, however, stood aloof; Fitzroy very visibly trembling, and Dick glaring defiantly at the drivers. Had I not been convinced of Dick's caution I should have said he meditated something desperate. Seeing the two standing idly thus, one of the drivers—a brutal fellow who had been promoted to the post he held because of his brutality—swinging his knotted thongs fiercely round his head, brought them across Fitzroy's back and neck with a stinging force which made that gentleman leap into the air and scream with pain. The next instant the whip was up again to do the same to Dick Stanley. I couldn't stand it.

"Stop, you black fiend!" I cried imperatively in English, at the same time rushing forward to the man. "Let but the point of your lash touch him and I'll have your life on the spot if mine go next minute."

For a second the lash dangled doubtfully in the air, then fell limply by the man's side.

"By the holy Djebel Haroun this must not be!" said Ali Kubla, rousing himself. "Knowest thou not, rash man with the girl's face, that thy life is as a drop of water under the sun, ready to be sucked up? I have told thee already that the law decreeth these slaves are

mine, not thine. Wherefore, then, dost thou presume to interfere?"

"You may swear by all the Djebel Harouns in the Koran," I answered wildly, "but you shall not as much as touch these men with your accursed lash while a pulse beats in my body. I have yet to see the law that decrees the slaves are yours; but whether yours or mine, they are men, and not beasts, to be scourged at your infernal pleasure. Lift but a finger against them, and as sure as that parchment skin of yours covers your old bones Captain Maupercieu shall call you to account for it. Think not that because I am in your power for a little that I cannot have redress, aye or revenge. The thickest built mosque in Mecca could not protect you from vengeance were the prince but to hint to Captain Maupercieu you injured as much as a hair of my head or the heads of those belonging to me."

The Arab frowned as I spoke, and all the guards stood round with their muskets ready as if they expected instant orders to shoot me down; and indeed when I came to realize myself what I had done I expected no other fate. But for the moment my passion gave me courage to spurn them all. Moreover, I had already seen that Maupercieu was a name to conjure with, and I was determined to make the fullest use of it.

"What sayest thou, accursed dog?" he hissed. "Beware of thyself. White infidel throats are not proof against the sharp steel."

"Bah! I care not that for you!" I said, spitting on the ground.

Now it so happens, although I didn't know it at the time, that to spit on the ground is the greatest affront you can give an Arab, unless you catch him by the beard and spit in his face.

Ali jumped in the air as if an arrow had pierced him.

"Thou hast defiled me!" he cried. "Thou hast defiled me! Blood alone can wipe out thy transgression. What if I give orders to have thy vile body made into a sieve with bullet-holes? or bring thy throat under my yataghan? Thou deservest it, because thou hast spit before my face; thou hast spurned my holy religion. Thinkest thou that the Supreme Knight, or he who sent thee, is a ghost to come between my wrath and thee?"

"I rely on nothing supernatural," I answered; "yet will I be revenged if thou injurest as much as a hair of my head. I tell thee thou durst not touch me; and that while I live no lash that is used in any service of thine shall scourge the back of any man of mine. Captain Maupercieu shall deal with thee as if they were his own."

Since I had got myself into a fix I might as well have it out with him. He muttered some words which I didn't understand—Arabian oaths, I suppose. Then he turned suddenly upon me again.

"Thou hast the face of a girl," he said savagely;

"but thou hast the heart of a lion or a devil, I know not which. Thou puttest an affront on me for which thou deservest to die, and yet thou finchest not."

"I flinch not, and never will," I answered, increasing the boldness of my tone as I saw my empty threats were affecting him. "The white man knoweth how to die, but knoweth not how to flinch."

"These dogs must work," he said. "The boats must be got over the water-jump, and they must help. They stood idle, therefore were they scourged."

"They shall work," I said, seeing I had got him round to a point at which a little concession might be prudent, "but not under the lash of thy dogs. Leave them to me, and thou shalt see with thine own eyes and acknowledge that no three men in the company shall acquit themselves better."

"Thou canst manage them," he said sullenly. Then calling to one of his men, "Give the white man a lash that he may urge his slaves."

"I desire no lash. I shall urge them by other means," I answered, turning on my heel to where my three companions stood dumfounded and aghast.

"Now, boys," I said, "show these savages what you can do. Pull for all you are worth, for your lives and mine depend on how you acquit yourselves; and I want to show that monster that men will work all the better for being treated humanely. Now, don't stare, but go at it."

They worked like bricks, each of them pulling as

much as any two of the others. Even the slender body of Fitzroy seemed to have been suddenly endowed with superhuman strength. I said nothing of how they were doing, but I saw that Ali Kubla was watching them with the corner of his eye, and that the better they pulled the darker grew his brow; and if he was compelled to spare them the lash, he made up for it to his own men. I never saw the stubbornest of horses in the hands of the least feeling of grooms so cruelly beaten as were those poor slaves. The drivers saw that the Arab was incensed, and to keep his favour laid on whether there was necessity or not. At every stroke of the heavy lash some poor wretch bit the dust, writhing in pain while the blood squirted from his wounds. The blood was actually running off them in streams, rather as if a pitcherful had been emptied over their heads, than as the produce of their own veins; and at every step they left a deep crimson stain. In many respects it was the most sickening sight I had seen. It was without the motive of the mutiny. There, while lives had been taken as freely as in a shambles, there was the ulterior comprehensible motive of booty; but here there was only the pleasurable sensation of inflicting pain. And to make matters worse the wretched victims had nothing of Indian stoicism, but shrieked whenever they saw the lash rise. When the drivers were particularly active the whole gang would raise a wailing howl which could be likened to nothing but the cry of lost souls hurled into perdition. I had

to bathe my head and face in the river for fear of fainting.

Ali Kubla seemed to derive the liveliest pleasure from these tortures and cries of agony. When he looked at my men (for such I now called them) his face would blacken in anger, but as he glanced at his own and saw the bleeding backs and the distorted appealing faces his features would gleam again into a diabolic smile.

It took us about three quarters of an hour to get the boats to the level ground above, and during all that time the whips had not been idle three minutes. When at length the boats were hauled on to the grass, five of the slaves were disabled from wounds and from fright. These were tied together and marched along to the spot at which the boats were to be launched again. The rest were allowed to pause for a few minutes to take breath, and I took advantage of the stoppage to speak to Ali Kubla about my companions.

"My lord perceiveth how the white man's slaves work without the lash," I said.

He turned his scowling eyes upon me.

"He perceiveth," he said coldly.

"Hath my lord not seen with his own eyes, and doth he not acknowledge that they did better than the black dogs?"

"If thou thinkest so it is so," he answered tartly.  
"The imaginations of a man's heart are truth to him.



Under the lash the black dogs did their best; without it did the white do more?"

"Nay, my lord," I answered respectfully, "but wherefore use the lash when it can be done without?"

"Thou art a man of great wisdom," he returned sarcastically. "But take heed lest thy wisdom make thee drunk. If it pleaseth me to lay the lash on the backs of these dogs, what is it, pray, to thee? Thou art an infidel Christian, a scoffer at our holy prophet Mahomet. Thou hadst the presumption to spit on the ground before mine eyes, which offence thy blood should have expiated, but for the love I bear my brother, the Supreme Knight of the Ocean. And now thou wouldst direct me in the management of my own slaves. I tell thee I will not have it. Do not presume too much. Captain Mauperceau and thy mighty prince are afar off, nor have they guards set on the passes of the forest. By my holy religion, I will cleave thee from the crown to the fork, if thou utterest another breath in censure of me."

As he said this he fairly shook with rage, and I saw his fingers twitching suggestively about the handle of his yataghan. At the same time the guards stood sullenly eyeing me as if they shared their master's anger, and were waiting for an order to put an end to me. Seeing this I thought it best to go on a conciliatory tack, and making a profound salaam, I said:

"My lord's servant prostrateth himself in the dust. I censured thee not. Far be it from my folly to in-



struct thy wisdom. Pardon, I pray thee, thy servant's offence. He meant but to tell thee of the white man's custom, and, lo! he hath kindled thee to anger."

"See thou do it not again, then," he answered sharply, and gave orders to proceed with the boats.

I was glad when we were afloat again and the whips laid aside, for I saw that my interposition had done more harm than good.

Ali Kubla put up his umbrella, but I was not invited to share its grateful shade. The heat was fearful, though the sun had long since passed the meridian. The clouds of steam were thickening on both sides of us till at last they grew to the density of a lusty British fog, only this fog was hot; and even from the water beneath us rose hot fumes. We continued our course without incident during the afternoon, and when night fell we landed on a green spot by the river side.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### STILL ON THE RIVER.

AS soon as we had got ashore and the boats tied up, we had some more dried meat, wild honey, and berries. These finished Ali Kubla turned to me with a contemptuous screw of the nose, and said:

"Perhaps the white man would like to feed his dogs with his own hand? If their stomachs be as delicate as their faces they require all his attention."

There was a scorn in his tone that was very aggravating, but as it was not my policy to notice it just then, I replied with all the air of simplicity I could assume, that I should indeed be glad to feed my men with my own hand. He looked at his lieutenant who was standing by, and both broke into a satirical laugh which pierced me like steel. I went over to my companions, however, and handed each a good piece of meat, a handful of berries, and some honey at least as clean as that which I had eaten myself.

"You're doing first-rate, boys," I whispered; "just you keep on and the deuce is in it if I don't steal a march on that old heathen,"

"And you're doing first-rate too, lad," returned Dick Stanley; "but my heart stood still yon time at the falls. I thought you were a goner. I did, sure's I'm a living man."

"You're a perfect brick, Lochiel; that's what you are," put in Fitzroy. "You should have been a general or something."

"I am something, man," I returned laughing. "But, look here, lest he should think things are going too smoothly with you, I want you to begin quarrelling among yourselves when I have gone away, so that I can have an opportunity of showing my authority as it were, as well as my humanity. Don't stop until I snatch up a musket and threaten to shoot you."

With that I walked off, for Ali Kubla was watching us suspiciously. The old sneer was on his face, which, however, I made a point of taking as a good-humoured smile.

"My lord laugheth at the tenderness of the white man," I said, thinking I might venture on a trifling familiarity.

"That he doth," he returned. "Thy acts are like the acts of a hag with an evil mind who ministereth from fear, not love. Art thou afraid of the knaves? It lieth on my mind thou carest not to offend them. Have they secrets? If so, speak; and by our holy prophet we will find means to silence their tongues and gratify thy heart."

"My lord hath the eye of the sun," I answered with

great obeisance; "but these dogs have no secrets, and I fear them not. I feed them thus because it is the custom in my country. Yet think not the white man cannot be severe with his slaves if they misbehave. My lord himself hath not a harder heart than the white man when anger cometh upon him."

With that Fitzroy and Ned Freely suddenly broke into an altercation, speaking loud and fast and squaring up to each other with clenched fists. Dick interfered, and for a moment the three swayed to and fro, then toppled over in a heap, struggling as if they would worry one another.

"See! see!" cried Ali Kubla, his eyes dilating with glee. "Thy dogs fight before thy face. They show their fangs, and honour thee not. Punish them now, till we see the white man's justice."

With an appearance of great rage I rushed to where they were struggling on the grass, leaped in among them, and in a moment had them sprawling separately about me. Then I began to talk in a loud and threatening voice, gesticulating fiercely as if I would strike them dead on the spot. They seemed cowed, and I turned to leave them, but no sooner had I moved away than they flew at each other again. I sprang back, but finding it impossible to separate them this time, ran to one of the guards, snatched his musket, and dashed back as if determined to shoot them. At sight of the musket they desisted, shrinking abjectly, and looking up in my face with such terror-stricken, be-

seething eyes, that for the moment I almost forgot I was only acting a part.

"How am I doing?" I asked in a stage whisper.

"Capital! capital!" squeaked Fitzroy, rolling himself to my feet in an agony of terror. "You're a born play-actor."

Swinging the musket round my head I made a feint of striking him, and he, quickly catching the cue, got to his knees imploring for mercy; and as he did so he whispered:

"You're a genius, Lochiel. You couldn't do it better if you were as mad as blazes."

Turning to Dick and Ned then I went through the same performance, and they, cowering fearfully at my feet, begged for forgiveness as Fitzroy had done. When they seemed frightened within an inch of their lives, I left them and returned to where Ali Kubla stood.

He was grinning as usual, and asked me why I had not shot them. I replied that I could have found it in my heart to do that, but that it would be inexpedient to despatch them just then as I might not be able to replace them satisfactorily; "and besides," I added, "I did not forget that they are my lord's until I put their price into his hand."

At this he grinned still broader, and nodded his head in approval.

"Were it not that they are of profit to me," he said musingly, toying with the handle of his yataghan, "I

would cut their throats and cast their carcasses into the river."

"It is only my duty to inform my lord," I rejoined gravely, "that Captain Maupercieu hath given a token to the prince, my master, that these slaves shall go uninjured, or that he who injureth them shall make expiation with his life."

"Those are the words of a king," he said. "Thinkest thou Captain Maupercieu holds the globe to deal out revenge as seemeth to him good? True, he hath a ship which is as the lion or the leopard in fierceness, but the lion and the leopard hold not dominion over all their fellows."

"My lord knoweth that Captain Maupercieu is all-powerful," I said. "He hath other ships besides the *Ocean Rover*, he hath other agents in Africa besides my lord. He holdeth Arabia from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, which swallowed up Pharaoh's chariots, even as my lord holdeth a coffle of slaves. The thunders of his guns shake the holy strait of Bab-el-Mandeb. From the peak of Teneriffe to the Gulf of Guinea, yea, and southward past Capricorn to the hushed tides of the Antarctic Sea, his emissaries range. The man liveth not who can offend him and escape his vengeance."

"Thou speakest as one having his heart in his mouth," returned the Arab. "Were it not that I owe a pilgrimage to Mecca, and that Captain Maupercieu storeth money in my purse, I would do what seemeth

to myself good, and laugh at his might, for the sands of Arabia are as the grave and the secret places of the forest as the tomb. But for the sake of our holy religion I crucify inclination, and do that which most profiteth me. At present it profiteth me to stand in the favour of the Supreme Knight, and if he careth aught for that token whereof thou speakest these slaves shall be well cared for, seeing thou wilt redeem them; and now, if thou wilt be surety they will not desert and thus defraud me, I will command that they be unshackled."

"I will be surety," I answered gleefully.

"Then are they at liberty," he said; and calling the chief driver ordered him to release them.

I don't think Abraham Lincoln could have been fuller of joy when he signed the declaration of emancipation than I was when I heard that old Arabian sinner give my companions their liberty. And they were scarcely less astonished than if an angel from heaven had descended to strike off their shackles.

"Well, boys," I said to them as soon as I got the chance, "I have put more sin on my head for your sakes within the past few days than I had put on in all my life before. I used to be accounted truthful, but now I begin almost to glory in my lies. I only hope I may be forgiven. Now, you must be careful how you conduct yourselves—be very civil and attentive to me. You're my slaves at present, you know, and you must act accordingly."



Both Dick Stanley and Ned Freely were so much affected that they could speak only with their eyes, but Mr. Fitzroy had the use of his tongue as usual.

"By Jove, Lochiel, this is the greatest achievement of your life!" he said jubilantly. "You must have lied splendidly to that old rascal, for I'm sure he's a grand liar himself. By gosh, it's good to be able to lie well, too!"

"When you fall in with Satan you must fight him with his own weapons," I said.

"Right you are, but it's not everyone that's up in that style of fencing. It must have been a sore bout. But fortune favours the brave, and we're all right again."

"I hope so," I said; "and I hope also you'll get us into no more scrapes, for this was all your doing."

"Don't be raking up old sores now, Lochiel. What's past's past, and can't be mended."

"No, but we may gather wisdom from the past and apply it to the future; and mind, if you get us into any more trouble, it'll not be me will get you out. Put that in your pipe and smoke it," and with that I left them.

The night had now quite fallen, and in the deep blackness the glare of our wood fire had an almost preternatural look. A number of the guards were squatted round it, and as the flames leaped up, illumining their black faces, I could think of nothing else but so many devils warming themselves in the nether

regions. They were not a prepossessing set at any time, but in that fitful Tartarean glare they were positively hideous. It made them look none the better that they laughed sometimes. They had got into a story-telling humour—a company of Africans will sit round a fire all night telling and listening to yarns—and were grinning a good deal, and opening and closing their thick lips—which reminded me of the leaves of a trap-door—in a way that made one shudder to look at them. Nor were the surroundings at all conducive to pleasant thinking. The dreary moan and gurgle of the river as it swept past, heard but not seen, was gruesomely suggestive of Lethe or Styx. I don't think I am a superstitious man, or attach any substantial value to the old heathen mythologies, but my hair had an inclination to stand up at the thought that Charon might at any moment land a cargo of ghosts upon us. I could scarcely keep from laughing at myself, but my inclination to laugh did not arise from any merriment.

After a while guards were posted round in military fashion, and the camp lay down to sleep. But no sleep was possible for me. I covered my head and stopped my ears, but though I knew it was as dark as pitch I could not help starting up every few minutes to see what was doing; and each time I looked up I grew more excited. A thousand fantastic shapes flashed before my eyes, and though I had company I am not sure but I was a bit afraid. I remember once drawing

my coat very tightly over my head, determined not to look up again, no matter what took place. But I wasn't well down when I was up again with a start, as if somebody had struck me a blow.

"Perhaps this is what comes of telling so many lies," I said to myself, staring about me in the pitchy blackness. "I've heard of the effects of an evil conscience. There's something up with mine, as sure's I'm living."

I lay down again with my face buried in the grass, and then all at once I became conscious of a tremendous din all round. The forest, which had been so silent all day, seemed to have burst all at once into clamorous life. There were screechings and whistlings and hummings and roarings—such a confusion of noises as I cannot describe, nor the reader well imagine. One time it seemed like the hum of ten thousand sewing machines, at another like the whirr of a thousand factories, at another like the roaring of an earthquake, and then the whole would combine. I could stand it no longer, and got to my feet. Once up I made out that the din was caused by insects and beasts of prey. There must have been millions and millions of insects, but as for the beasts of prey I will risk no figures, because I have since found that half a dozen will make the noise of fifty kennels. Again I went and lay down and tried to sleep, but if it had been hard before it was now flatly impossible. There was nothing for it but to sit up and walk about till morning; and, oh, how that night dragged—I sincerely pity those

who lie awake at night. I'd rather be in a galley at any time. Towards morning I managed to drop off for a little, but was soon shaken up and told that breakfast was ready. Breakfast! what was breakfast to a sleepy man like me? I desired only to be let alone; but my tormentors wouldn't let me alone. So I rose and ate some berries and dirty honey.

Immediately after eating we started again. For a while it was delightful on the river, but in a few hours it got hotter than it had been the day before, and we suffered terribly. We rowed ahead, however, though without any adventure worth mentioning, and at night got ashore and camped. The same old noises got up around us, but I was too weary to be disturbed by them, and that night slept like a top.





## CHAPTER XV.

### WE MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF ROYALTY.

THE record of the next five days is simply a record of incessant, broiling toil. Every day, as we advanced into the reeking continent, the sun grew hotter and hotter. It was no longer a beneficently warming and illuminating orb, but a burning persecuting furnace. Each morning, as I saw it climb the eastern sky in all its terrific glory, I scanned it with affright, thinking of what was coming. Being now restored to the good graces of Ali Kubla, I shared his umbrella of palm leaves; but even with that protection my marrow seemed to be trickling from my bones. Bad as I was, however, my unfortunate companions were worse. Fitzroy kept his coat sedulously over his head, and Dick dipped his hat in the water every quarter of an hour or so; yet, with all these precautions, they were fast melting away. For two days, where the river spread itself over a flat marshy country, we were paddling through shallow lakes, where the water was so filthy and hot we could not even bear to bathe in it; and notwithstanding our ample supply of berries

we suffered terribly from thirst, and still more terribly from insects.

It seemed as if we were in the midst of Egyptian plagues, for sometimes the air was absolutely black with swarms of flies. At one time we were blinded and maddened by mosquitoes, at another a thousand or two dragon-flies would charge us in a body, shooting against our faces like arrows, sticking there for half a second to help themselves to a mouthful of flesh and blood, and off again before we had time to raise a finger against them; at other times the two would be upon us together, and then it was like the assault of swarms of angry bees crowding one over the other to get a sting at you. At such times we crushed them in handfuls, though no sooner was one handful down than another took its place. Before we got out of that swampy region my face was swollen to double its natural size, and aching terribly. I was afraid to laugh for fear of bursting the skin, and I was afraid to cry or use high language for the same reason. I was a stoic on compulsion, and I doubt not presented a very grave and venerable appearance with my puffed-up head. I have heard of people having their heads swelled by vanity, and I have seen a few with swelled heads after a fight; but mine excelled them all. Strange to say, Ali Kubla and his men suffered no annoyance from the flies; but my friends were, if possible, in a sorrier plight than myself. Fitzroy's face had lost human shape entirely, and resembled nothing

that I can think of but a full-blown purple bladder with two little beads for eyes and the tiniest slit, or rather suggestion of a slit, for a mouth. He looked at me pretty frequently; but, as he was unable to put any expression into his features, I couldn't make out whether he was on the point of crying, or whether he was trying to wink roguishly at me. Dick's face was not quite so bad; but I am sure that had his own mother seen him she would have passed him by as a stranger. It was really no joke, for if we continued to bulge out in this way no skin in the world could hold out; and, great heavens, what should be the consequences if our skins broke? Our plight grew so serious, that at last, in sheer despair, I consulted the interpreter. He was a handy fellow, a bit of a botanist, and for ever making medicinal concoctions from herbs and shrubs. He examined us very minutely, and after cracking a few African jokes at our expense, the drift of which we happily couldn't see, scraped up a handful of earth, and pouring a few drops of clear liquid on it from a small phial, rubbed it thoroughly into our faces. The pain was excruciating, but the swelling almost immediately began to subside.

“Have you ever seen anybody's face burst?” I asked, when the operation was over.

“Me never seen white man here befoa.”

“Black men's faces don't swell, I suppose.”

“No, them don' care a cont'nental for flies; them like your boot.”



I was struck with his mastery of the idioms of the English tongue, and asked him where he had acquired it.

"From Cap'n Maupercieu's men," he answered proudly; "them bully, oh, them bully for swears."

"Ali Kubla can't talk English like them?" I said.

"No, him don' know swear or nothing," he said in contempt.

I thanked him for his surgical aid and turned away, thinking about the spread of the glorious English language; the richest, scholars assure us, in the world.

On the third day we buried, or rather threw into the river, one of the rowers who died from heat and exhaustion, and on the following day another. Ali Kubla told me they were the only two worthless fellows he had, and he was glad to be rid of them. Indeed he had had private thoughts about having them quietly killed, for they were no workers, and were without pecuniary value as property; but they had very kindly gone off of their own accord, and he was saved the trouble.

"Slaves be like cattle," said Ali; "they sicken and die, and thou canst not help it, and hast to make up the loss in the others."

It was doubtless sound commercial wisdom, but it came strangely in connection with human beings.

Towards sundown on the seventh day (which, as nearly as I could guess, for I had lost my reckonings of days, was the Christian Sabbath) we sighted our destination, having walked a distance of sixteen or

eighteen miles inland from the river. This was Osweego the capital of Koompupa, king of the Koompupa nation, a fierce tribe of warriors and slave-holders. The king bore the name of the nation, for it was an article of the constitution that he must drop his baptismal name on his accession to the throne.

We halted about two miles off on the brow of a small hill, and sent messengers to see whether his majesty would be graciously pleased to permit us to approach him. In reply he sent three regiments of his guards, the most rascally fellows you could set eyes on, to conduct us to the palace. On marching up to where we were they saluted Ali Kubla, then formed a square, keeping us in the centre, and in this way we marched into the metropolitan city, Osweego. They had no music nor sound of any sort, and we walked up the grassy streets as silent as panthers. Arrived in the heart of the city, the slaves were at once driven to the barracoons in charge of the lieutenant and an escort of one regiment, while Ali Kubla, Dick Stanley, Fitzroy, Ned Freely, and myself squatted on the grass with the other two regiments, till the king should be pleased to send for us. He was particularly engaged just then, we were told, breaking the jaw and clipping the tongue of one of his wives who had been guilty of divulging court secrets. He must have been an awkward workman, or her jaw and tongue must have been superhumanly hard and tough, for we sat there fully three quarters of an hour. At last word came that he was

ready to see us, and we were conducted into the royal presence.

I had never seen a king of any sort, and was naturally curious about the looks of his majesty, King Koompupa. I did not exactly expect to see him attired according to the European fashion; but I was scarcely prepared for the sight I saw. Here it is. On a rough matting of rushes before the door of a wretched little hut, into which a Highland crofter would scarcely have put his pig, was squatted the great potentate, naked as when he was born save for a girdle about his middle. On each side in the same nude state sat two of his courtiers. His hands were red with blood, I suppose from his wife's tongue, and his hair, which was like a tangled forest undergrowth, towered into a huge truculent knot on the top of his head, and was stuck full of ostrich plumes. His teeth, which he kept constantly exposed like a vicious dog, were filed, his eyes bloodshot and rolling, and his jaws heavy like a hounds, as if they had been made for crunching the bones of his fellow-men. His sceptre was a long spear exactly like those carried by his soldiers. This was the kingly person into whose presence we had been ushered by two whole regiments.

Ali, who was a good bit in front, saluted him most humbly, of which he scarcely took any notice. His eyes were bent more towards those who were coming behind; and no sooner had he caught sight of us than he leaped up with a horrible yell, and came running

toward us whirling his spear in anything but a pleasant or assuring way. If I had had a gun I believe I should have shot him on the spot, so hideously inhuman did he look. When he was within six feet of us he stopped, and lowering his spear touched first our left breast over the heart and then our forehead. We bowed slightly as he did this, though the idea of doing obeisance to such a monster went sorely against my spirit. When he had touched us one by one in that way in front he walked round and touched us in the small of the back and the neck. We stood perfectly still while he was going through these manœuvres, though the sensation produced by the needly point of his weapon against our bodies was anything but conducive to calmness. We could not make out what he was up to—whether he was challenging us to battle, or whether his antics were but some specially gracious way of receiving guests. Our only consolation was that in his playfulness he had not run us through. As he walked round tapping us, he repeated the word “puganda” several times, which, of course, was perfectly unintelligible to us. When he had finished his inspection he darted erratically forward, and spoke a few hasty words to Ali Kubla.

“Perhaps he is arranging a grand public execution of us,” I said to myself. But I was wronging his majesty. Hardly had he spoken when two of his courtiers went into the hut, and bringing out half a dozen more mats laid them beside Koompupa’s. Then

we were invited to come forward and be squatted. Presently the two courtiers brought out an armful of wooden bowls, giving one to each of us; then they gave us some boiled rice and milk, of which, although we could see it was fearfully dirty, we made a good meal. When we had cleaned our bowls Koompupa desired us through Ali Kubla's interpreter to come round him in a semicircle, so that he could put a few questions to us. He wanted to know who we were, whence we came, whither we were bound, and what was our business. I had again to go over all the lies I had told Ali Kubla; and this time at the disadvantage of not being able to invent. To vary my story would be fatal, though many improvements suggested themselves to me, for Ali Kubla was listening intently to each answer as it was translated to the king. This caused me to hesitate a little, because, after each question, I had to run back in my own mind to see if Ali had asked me the same or a similar one, and if so, what answer I had returned. I was afraid the king would grow impatient under this hesitancy; but he did not seem to regard it as anything else than the effect of the awe that was natural in the presence of so great a potentate as himself, and I got through the ordeal pretty well. He listened to me almost without comment, and when I had done to my utter surprise merely told me he would think of what I had said. Like a true monarch he would not commit himself. In the meantime he must talk to his great servant Ali Kubla about the price of

slaves, and go and see the latest arrivals at the barracoen. We should remain quietly where we were until he had finished his business, when, if nothing else turned up in the interval, he would talk with us again. As the interpreter went with them we were left to converse as we pleased, since there was nobody about who could understand a word of what we said. We were all in tolerably good spirits now, that is good enough to indulge in a joke on the person and manners of our host. We did not continue long in this vein, however, for more serious concerns were pressing themselves upon us. Here we were in the heart of Africa without friends, without arms, and worst of all, without plans.

"Don't forget," I said to my companions, "that you are no longer free men; Ali Kubla claims an interest in your bodies. In plain English, he owns you. I will carry out the scheme of redeeming you, but it must be done adroitly. If I were to buy you right off he would be sure to smell a rat after all I have told him; and for the prospect of plunder would very likely murder every mother's son of us."

"By gad, Lochiel, you're a shrewd fellow," said Fitzroy; "he's a blackguardly-looking rascal, and would snip off our heads in a minute, I believe."

"You may be assured of it," I said, "if it served his interest. But he's under the impression at present that his interest and ours are identical. He must keep that impression until we're safely out of this. I told him,

in those big lying speeches I made, that if he gives me a gun and ammunition, in three days you should be redeemed."

"How would you go about it, lad?" asked Dick.

"Well, I have no very clear purpose; but it was running in my head to go out into the forest well armed and remain away the three days, then return with the gold you gave me as if I had found it in some mysterious way."

Dick shook his head.

"Ye couldn't live out there a night," he said. "The wild beasts would eat ye. Ye'd be like Daniel in the lions' den with nobody to shut their mouths."

"If I can't live out there, Dick, you can't be free; that's all," I said. "Ali Kubla will sell you, depend upon it. He's determined to have his price for you. If I don't redeem you, you're slaves for life."

"I don't see why Lochiel couldn't dodge the wild beasts," said Fitzroy. "Bless me, he can go out a bit and climb a tree and roost there. I'm sure there are trees not far from here in which a man could lodge well enough for a night or two."

"Then you go out and see how ye would like it," said Dick sharply. "If you hain't lost the courage ye had some time since, it would just be your heart's delight. You're a man that wouldn't mind being killed."

"Kill or no kill, I'm going," I said, interposing between them. "I have carried the thing so far, and I'm not going to funk now."



"No, lad," said Dick firmly; "ye she'n't go. Ye ain't going out into them forests alone if I can help it."

"Well, what is to be done, then?" I said. "Are we all going to remain passively here in the slave-pen of that old rascal? I'm no coward, Dick; I can go out into the forest and come back with a whole skin."

"God knows ye ain't no coward," said Dick; "we have proved that already. But ye ain't going out there alone. It would be no use, because ye'd only get killed yerself without saving us."

"Well, what's to be done, then?" I demanded impatiently.

"If you go I go," said Dick resolutely.

"You go!" I echoed. "Man, you're daft! Have you forgotten there's a price on your head?"

"Price or no price, if you go I go," repeated Dick doggedly.

At first I thought the thing impossible, but on coming to consider it more closely, I fancied that by skilful cajoling and a few more fibs Ali Kubla might be induced to grant me Dick's company. To tell the truth, I did not fancy the prospect of going into those mysterious woods alone, and was nothing loth to give Dick's scheme a trial. Accordingly when Ali returned I immediately reminded him of the expedition I had to undertake for gold, and adroitly brought in that, as the time was limited, it would help me greatly if Dick were allowed to accompany me.

"Thou mayest assuredly go," he answered; "but

him thou hast not redeemed yet. How, then, can I let him go out of my sight when he may not return to me again?"

"If my lord hath not confidence in me as the brother of Captain Maupercieu," I answered proudly, "I ask not the slave. Nay, I would not have him were he pressed upon me. I requested him that I might the speedier return to my lord with gold. Keep him fast—he is thine until I redeem him."

Whether it was policy, or whether my saucy speech made him ashamed of his suspicions, I know not, but instantly changing his tone, he said:

"If thou wilt give me a token that if he die, or desert, or be devoured by beasts of prey, thou wilt either pay for him thyself or Captain Maupercieu shall, he may go with thee, but the others remain."

"My lord speaketh as a man of wisdom," I replied humbly. Then with great ceremony I pencilled a note to Captain Maupercieu. Before writing I satisfied myself that, although Ali had learned to speak English from contact with Englishmen, he couldn't read it, nor could his interpreter. Accordingly I wrote as follows without fear of being detected:—

To Captain Maupercieu.

Sir,—Ali Kubla, the man into whose hands you delivered us, is a thief and a villain. He has cribbed my companions, and wants me to buy them back as slaves. I am forced to submit to his demands because

I cannot lick him. But he's not so smart as he thinks either, for I have stolen a march on him in a way he does not dream of. I hope I'll be able to get fully upsides with him yet. He is the cruellest brute I ever saw, and he lashes his slaves as if they were beasts. If the devil can match him when he gets him, he's a great deal worse than he's called. We go off on a tack of our own pretty soon, so you needn't expect to see me again. Ali thinks this is an order on you for some money. When he presents it the best thing you can do is to hang him to the yard-arm.—Yours truly,

KENNETH CAMERON.

I presented this letter as if it were a state warrant; and Ali was so well pleased that he immediately went for the two best muskets he owned, which he handed to Dick and myself, with ample ammunition, and many expressions of good-will and wishes for our safe return.

Something had called the king away, and we did not see him till we were invited to squat for supper. When it was over he told us in a friendly chat that he was anxious to cultivate friendly relations with the white man; and that he would never invade the white man's country or kill him. He further told us that if we would be pleased to accept his hospitality he would like to keep us for a whole moon. As an inducement to remain he would set four of his royal huts at our disposal; and if we cared to have wives to cheer us we could make a selection from his own batch, or he

would issue orders to have all the comeliest women of his kingdom assembled at Oswego; in order that we might have a larger choice. We thanked his majesty very humbly, and said that we were unworthy of all the honours he was heaping upon us; that we did not care for wives, since we understood they were often a serious discomfort; and that, since we were pressed for time, we would take it as a mark of his royal favour if he would permit us to depart on our business on the morrow. He expressed great regret at our decision, and again pressed us to take wives for the night we were to remain. When we again declined he said:

"The white man hath the rudiments of sense after all. Wives are a mixed blessing. It was a mistake to make them with tongues, for they gabble; yet would I like to see the white man honouring the women of my country. If I were in the white man's country I would take his wife."

I thought such a thing extremely unlikely, and I could not help smiling at the idea of how our high-bred English ladies would receive the gallantries of this black and ugly African.

Seeing that we were not to be prevailed upon to marry nor to stay a whole moon, he drifted again to the subject of our mission.

"Hath the white man's country no gold," he asked, "that he cometh so far to seek it, and encountereth the spear of the warrior and the tooth of the lion?"

"Yes, your most excellent and gracious majesty,"

I answered; "more than he can count or knoweth well what to do with."

"Wherefore, then, seeketh he more?" he asked quickly.

I then tried to explain to him how gold was held in Britain, and what uses it was put to. I told him that although there were untold tons of it in the country, yet it was so ill distributed that many of the people had not enough of it to buy themselves a morsel of bread; while those who owned it kept it locked up in strong buildings called banks, where nobody could get at it but those who knew the secret way of opening the doors. He was a good deal surprised at this state of things, and asked me how it had ever come about. I was proud to tell him that it was the result of a process that had been going on for centuries called civilization, the glory of which was to give the clever man all the money, and the honest, dull man none.

"What meanest thou by clever?" he asked. "Is it not the strongest man that hath most riches?"

"No, your majesty," I answered. "Riches in the white man's country go not by strength but by craft. A dwarf may roll in riches and a giant starve."

"Then I am sorry for the white man," he said contemptuously. "But tell me, are the banks, as thou callest them, as large and strong as Koompupa's hut?"—pointing to the miserable little hovel beside us.

I could not help smiling.

"A thousand times larger and stronger," I answered.

"They are as tall as the trees of the forest, and as strong as the mountains."

"And full of gold?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"And people starving?"

"Yes, your majesty."

At that he fell into such a fit of laughing that I thought he had gone mad.

"How tall are the white men?" he asked.

"As tall as his most excellent majesty King Koompupa," I answered.

Again he fell into a horrible fit of laughing.

"Are the white men's tongues longer than mine?" he said, thrusting out the longest tongue I ever saw except on a hound; "for the white man knoweth how to boast. What punishment has the white man for lying?"

For a little I was nonplussed and knew not what to say. But after a moment's consideration I thought it best to take the thing as a joke, and replied lightly that in civilized countries a man usually can tell as many lies as he likes provided he do not perjure himself.

"And is perjury telling big big lies?" he asked.

"Yes, your majesty."

"Then thou mayest be glad thou art not in thine own country at this moment, for thou hast just told the biggest lie ever uttered."

"I hope your majesty doth not doubt the white man's word," I said with much concern.

"Assuredly, when he telleth me that banks — of which I have never heard before — are taller and stronger than Koompupa's hut. But I am not angry, for I love an entertaining story, and thine has been a good one."

I was glad when presently some of his officers came on some business which called him away. We saw no more of him that night, which I counted no inconsiderable blessing. I had a long consultation with Ali Kubla, in which he several times desired me not to forget the great favour he was doing me in letting Dick accompany me. Dick and I soon retired to dream of a great many things, and early on the morrow morning started gallantly forth, with our muskets across our shoulders and our pockets bulged with ammunition and provisions.







## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE SEARCH FOR GOLD.

AS soon as we were out of sight we sat down to think out a programme.

"What's it to be, lad?" asked Dick thoughtfully, resting his cheek on his hand and his elbow on his knee.

"I don't know," I replied. "I wish we could just sit quietly here for a while, and then return to Osweego. Bad as it is there's company there, and upon my word I don't a bit fancy this adventure."

"Don't say that, lad," said Dick quickly; "don't say that. If we lose heart we're done; keep up your spirits, that's half the battle."

"Yes," I said, "as the old Scotch proverb has it, 'Tine heart tine a';" and I suppose it's true. Let's lay our plans then and stick to them. If we die we die, and if we don't we don't, and there's no saying what our luck may be. Many a bird's nest is found that's never sought."

"There ain't no disputin' that," said Dick with a smile. "Though I'm afeerd there ain't no bird's nests for us this trip."

"Well, well, there's no saying; let's consider ourselves adventurous knights going out for gold, it may make our hearts a little higher even if we shouldn't succeed."

After a good deal of guessing and discussion as to our whereabouts we decided to pursue our way in a north-westerly direction, because we fancied—on what grounds I cannot recall now—that was the shortest cut out of the dominions of his majesty King Koompupa. We knew we must go outside of his kingdom somewhere, for we should be questioned on our return; and if Ali Kubla found we were only playing hide-and-seek with him it was hard to say what the upshot might be.

Notwithstanding our doughty resolution to keep up our hearts we neither walked nor talked very briskly when we started again. Indeed our spirits were away an unreckonable number of degrees below zero. The only comfort we had was that we were well armed, and that we wouldn't therefore die without a fight.

For a long distance our way lay through rolling prairie lands, where the grass was sometimes high enough to wave above our heads. Of course it was extremely difficult to proceed, and the progress was slow. The first day we didn't do more than ten miles. When night overtook us we were still in the midst of that vast sea of nodding plumes; and there was nothing for it but to lie down where we were, with the pleasurable prospect of being eaten before morning. Like improvident travellers, too, we had long since eaten the

pocketful of berries apiece with which we had started, and were beginning to get dreadfully thirsty; but we had just to grin and bear. As soon as the sun went down the old din of insects began. I lay listening to it till it became a sort of dreamy music in my ears; then dropped gently off to sleep. Scarcely had I entered the land of nod when I was startled by a fearful roar, and starting up looked about for a lion or some other beast of prey. But presently I discovered it was only Dick snoring, and lay down again. I have heard a good many snorers in my life, but never one like honest Dick Stanley. There was something whole-souled and hearty about everything that Dick did. It was his nature to be in earnest about things, and he did not trifle in his snoring any more than in anything else. I must say that with the hum of the insects, and the long-drawn snores of Dick there was a very pretty concert. On the whole Dick maintained his part very successfully. Sometimes the insects seemed to be making more than their share of noise, but Dick, rousing himself, would give a few very long snores, then break into a series of snorts with which the abashed flies could not at all compete. By and by, however, there came sounds that his best snoring could not match. As I heard them my blood ran cold.

"Beasts of prey on the prowl," I said to myself. "To-morrow night we shall be right in their midst, and then heaven only knows what shall take place. Even to-night they may scent us."

I could not tell how far off they were, but knew they were a considerable distance; and after listening a while again fell asleep, so wondrously does the mind sometimes put away danger. When I awoke it was broad daylight, and Dick was sitting up looking at me.

"Well, lad, how goes it?" he asked almost cheerily.

"Oh, pretty well," I said. "Dreaming I was in the Highlands."

"A good bit off from there, my lad."

"Yes," I said, rubbing my eyes and looking about me. "A good bit."

After a few mouthfuls of that eternal dried meat we rose to resume our journey. But we instantly lay down again. Not more than a hundred yards from us was a string of about fifty warriors pushing swiftly and silently along in the same direction as ourselves, and from the alertness of their mien it was clear they were not out for a morning stroll. On a second glance we recognized them as Koompupa's men, and a fearful thought flashed across my brain.

"Dick, I'll bet a penny they're after us," I said.

He started at these words.

"After us, lad?" he repeated. "What makes you think that?"

"You didn't see that letter I wrote to the slaver-captain," I said.

"No."

"Well, Ali Kubla thought it was an order on the

captain for money if we didn't turn up again; but it wasn't. It was simply my opinion of Ali's character in pretty plain terms, and I'll bet Fitzroy has gone and translated it for them. He might do it on compulsion."

"Or a bribe," added Dick.

"Or a bribe," I said. "The little devil, I wonder if he would do it?"

"You wonder if he would do it," said Dick; "a man who has massacred a whole ship's crew. Aye, lad, that he would if his own mother should suffer. He's fit for anything. I never liked him from the first minute I set eyes on him. He's afraid to go back to England now, because it might be too hot for him. And he's curryin' favour with the old Arab, that's what he's up to."

There was a good deal of probability in what Dick said, though I was loth to believe that Fitzroy could be treacherous enough to betray those who were even then on an expedition to save him. On the other hand he was a little coward, and if Ali Kubla threatened him with the lash he would read the letter in a jiffey. But whether betrayed or not we were certain there was something in the wind that portended no good to us. Standing up again cautiously we watched the bobbing heads of the warriors just visible above the tall grass. They were pursuing the path we were supposed to be on as straight as if they saw us in front—a circumstance which led us to think they

must have seen us start after we had arranged our course.

"Here's a fix," said Dick. "I wouldn't fall in with those fellows for a thousand dollars, and I'm a poor man. We must change our course, lad."

We sat down again and thought for a good while, but somehow we couldn't think to any purpose. Move indeed we must, but whether east or west or north or south we couldn't decide; so we tossed for it, and the result will show on what trifles our fate often hinges. I took out one of the gold pieces which Dick had given me and whirled it in the air.

"Now," I said, "the best out of three for east and west, and the winner against north and south, and so on till some one of them is ahead, and whichever wins that's our road if it doesn't take us straight in the track of those fellows."

"All right," said Dick. "Toss away."

South was the winner, and without a moment's hesitation or a word of comment we shouldered our muskets and strode away.

Eight hours of incessant hard toil brought us out of the long grass to comparatively open ground, where the walking was easier. Here we sat down to rest ourselves and have some more of that spicy meat. But I at least couldn't eat it. I had no saliva in my mouth to moisten it, nor indeed any appetite for food, though I had toiled all day on an almost empty stomach. I was a little sick and in ill spirits, and already suffering

from over-fatigue. We lay flat on the earth so as not to attract the attention of any warriors or spies who might be prowling about. Presently we discovered thin circles of smoke rising against the sky to the westward, and we knew we were in the vicinity of some kraal. I was staring away at the peacefully mounting smoke, and thinking in my despondency how happy they were who stuck quietly at home and did not trouble with the big world outside, when suddenly Dick caught my arm with a grip that almost made me call out.

"See! see!" he said excitedly, "there's another band on our trail."

I looked in the direction in which he pointed, and sure enough there was another company of armed blacks, extended like beaters on a mountain hare hunt.

"God bless us, Dick, what are we to do?" I said. "They're coming straight towards us. If we get up to run they'll see us. If we lie still they'll walk right on the top of us. Do you think they're really looking for anybody?"

"I judge they're looking for somebody all right," answered Dick. "Can't we crawl back into the long grass and hide?"

Now we had been so much disgusted with the long grass when we were in it that we had advanced a considerable distance from its edge before sitting down. Ere we could crawl back half the distance they should be upon us.



"No use, Dick," I said. "Let's get up and run, that's our only chance."

"And a mighty poor one," said Dick. "These fellows are as swift as wolves, and as soon as ever they saw us bolting they'd start the chase."

"I suppose we'll better say our prayers and close our eyes then," I said a trifle impatiently, "for kill us they will if we stay here."

Dick turned over on his side to have a better look about him.

"See!" he said, pointing to a little knoll a bit to the east of us. "Let's try and crawl round there. It may give us shelter, and it may not, but anyway it'll be better than stayin' here."

"All right," I said, "crawl away," and immediately we began to crawl on our belly like the serpent. I cannot tell how we managed it, seeing we dared not use our limbs except as a swimmer might use them, but at last we reached the little hillock almost beside ourselves with heat and excitement. Once on the lee-side we were able to get on our knees and have a look back to see whether we had been discovered. To our inexpressible relief there was no sign that we had. But they were coming up quickly and should be upon us in a few minutes, so that we had little time to watch them. The hillock was in reality a projecting rock with some tall reedy grass growing in front. We pushed this aside gently so as not to break it, and to our extreme joy found an opening under the over-

hanging stone which might accommodate us both if we squeezed close together. We passed lightly through the grass, lifting it up carefully behind us to hide our marks, and quickly squeezed ourselves into the recess.

"It's kill or cure now," said Dick. "They may pass us, but if they don't we're in a handy trap here."

To encourage ourselves we laid our muskets by us so as to be ready to shoot, and we also went through the ceremony of laying out some ammunition. The grass before us was but a thin fringe through which we could catch glimpses of the plain outside. As soon as we discovered this we could not help peeping out, and we had not peeped long when we saw another band coming towards us from the front.

"It's a regular hunt," I whispered. "I believe those fellows have seen us, for they're coming direct upon us."

I almost felt impelled to get up and rush out. It would at least be some satisfaction to fight for my life, and perhaps kill one or two of my pursuers. To lie there like a trapped animal to be taken at their leisure was intolerable. Forward they came straight to our hiding-place.

"Dick," I whispered again, "I'm sure they have seen us. Let's go out and fight them, and not be killed here like rats."

"How do you know they have seen us?"

"They're coming straight to where we are," I answered.

"We may as well die here as anywhere else, then. Lie still."

I did lie still, but, oh, in what exquisite torture! We could now hear them calling to one another as they advanced. They were closing up nearer each other, in fact it was clear they were surrounding our hole, and in a minute or two more would be at the sport of spearing us where we lay.

"Dick," I whispered again, unable to restrain myself, "I'm going out to fight for it. I can't stand this any longer. I'm suffering the agony of a hundred deaths looking at them coming on."

"Lie still!" he said authoritatively.

"I tell you I can't," I said. "I see them grinning in triumph, and must be out to have a shot at them."

"Don't be a fool. Lie still, I tell you. Are you going to funk just at the minute we want nerve?"

Dick had never spoken to me in this way before and I was piqued a bit, and it was well I was for it saved my life. As I couldn't reply to him I lay for a moment planning a fine tongue-thrashing for him if we ever got out of that alive. But my thoughts of revenge were almost instantly interrupted by a knocking on the stone above us, and a voice calling out "miniko puganda," which we afterwards learned meant 'the white men are not here.'

Dick put his mouth close to my ear.

"They hain't seen us," he said, "For yer life don't budge."

We could now hear them conversing perfectly plain, and a great jabbering they had. They all seemed to talk at once so that no individual voice could be distinguished.

The sun being now well to the westward the rock under which we lay threw a shadow into which about twenty of them presently came and sat down. I held my breath, for they were so near they might almost hear us breathe. After a little I peeped out again very quietly, and there—the reader will scarcely believe it—was Fitzroy in their very midst. I pinched Dick and pointed out. He looked and immediately I felt his heart thump with excitement.

“I’m going to shoot him,” I whispered recklessly.

Dick shook his head at me, and knit his brows furiously.

“Well, we have had all this trouble for nothing,” I heard Fitzroy say presently.

I glanced out again and saw that the interpreter was seated beside him.

“They’re terrible scoundrels,” went on Mr. Fitzroy, “and I’d like to catch them.”

“Would you, man?” thought I; “you little know how close you are to them.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised if they’re hiding in that long grass over there,” he said again. “They’re cowardly beggars, you know. Gad, before we met you I had them frightened out of their lives a hundred times.

It wouldn't be a bad spec' to set fire to that grass and burn the hounds out."

I could hardly control myself. I was now more anxious to kill than I had ever been to save.

"If them catched, Koompupa and Ali Kubla break their jaws and tear out their tongues," said the interpreter pleasantly.

"And they richly deserve it," said Fitzroy emphatically, "or anybody who would go and write a letter like yon. Gad, it was lucky I suggested reading it to the old man."

Why did the earth not open and swallow him? for the regions below never received a worthier guest. He was talking like that within four feet of where we lay. I could have reached out and touched him on the back with my gun. I hope I may be forgiven, but in that moment I committed murder in my heart. I would have killed him on the spot had I been alone, but enraged as I was I couldn't endanger Dick's life. After that talk our pursuers lapsed into silence. We had literally to hold our breath. A single unguarded wheeze meant discovery and destruction. Only those who have held their breath under penalty of death can conceive our agony. We held in until we were purple in the face and almost exploding. When I thought the crisis had come, and I must either breathe or die, I saw Dick make a sort of tube of his hands, stick them to the ground, and put his mouth to them. I immediately did the same. This conducted the

sound into the earth, and gave us relief. But I thought I never heard such noise in my life. Calm, natural breathing is a quiet and peaceful thing, so quiet and peaceful that when we are at ease and the world astir about us we are never conscious of it, but when you have held in for several minutes under strong excitement, the first breath you draw is like the rush of steam from a safety-valve. I was at ease—comparatively speaking—for a little, and glad to find means of breathing without making myself heard; but ere long—that is, in a minute or two—a tickling sensation got into my throat and I wanted to cough. It would be foolish for me to attempt to tell the reader, who has never been in any similar situation, how badly I wanted to cough. But he may have noticed at church the great coughing that commonly follows a prayer. When the slight constraint and silence of a few minutes—during which one can breathe freely enough—causes so much coughing, fancy then what it is to be cooped up so near men who are after your life that you could put out your hand and touch them, in a stillness so awful that silence itself seems to be on tiptoe listening. Presently the tickling extended to my nostrils and away down to the bottom of my chest. At last it became so terrible that in spite of myself I gave a little snort. The fright which this caused gave me relief for a moment, but only for a moment, and when my torment returned it was worse than ever. Now, I wanted to sneeze as well as cough, and felt



that in a second more nature would be too much for me. In sheer desperation I thrust down my face, and before I knew what I was about had swallowed a mouthful of earth. There was a little hiss through my nose, but that was all, and to my unbounded joy I found that for the time Mother Earth had completely cured me. When I had recovered myself a bit I ventured to glance out again. They were all sitting as I had last seen them, except one who had turned round and was gazing steadily in at us. I was sure his eyes had caught mine, and drew back in horror. I lay still as death for some seconds, not daring to breathe even through my hands. Then an overpowering temptation to look out again came upon me. He was sitting as before with his eyes bent directly upon me. I was certain it was all up with us. Even if the fellow did not see us as he was, he could not help seeing us when he rose. I felt my rifle so as to be ready if he made a move. I began to count the seconds—one, two, three, four, up to sixty—a full minute. I put my hands to my mouth and took a long, deep breath, then peeped out again. My breath stopped for his eyes were gleaming in triumph. I heard the grass rustle; he must be rising. I grasped my rifle and brought it forward a bit, for I resolved not to die without killing Fitzroy. One, two, three seconds, up to thirty—half a minute. Why didn't he rise and be done with it? I must peep out again. There he was, grinning triumphantly as before. I



could bear the suspense no longer, and was raising my rifle to blaze into them, when I heard Fitzroy's voice.

"Well, are we going to fire the grass?"

"You fiend, I'll fire you!" I said to myself. My gun rose half way to my shoulder, but something impelled me to lay it down again.

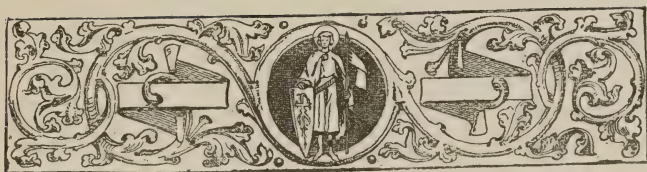
"I wouldn't like to go back without them, and if they're there it'll bring them out of cover."

Again my gun rose and again fell, this time with a little click against a small stone. But I didn't care now whether we were discovered or not, for I thought only of revenge.

"Come let us fire it and roast them where they lie."

I peeped quietly out. The man who had been looking in had turned his face the other way. I could see Fitzroy's face. He had risen to his feet and was looking at the interpreter with his old smile.

Presently the interpreter also got to his feet, and said something in the Koompupa language; immediately another man repeated it in a commanding voice, and the whole company rose. As they did so the man who had been looking in at us caught a handful of grass and bent it aside. My heart stopped and my head grew dizzy. For a moment things were dark as night about me; but I soon recovered, and peeping out again had the satisfaction of seeing the last man go round the corner of our rock.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### FLIGHT.

FULLY three minutes passed ere Dick or myself could speak; and when we found our voices they sounded as strange and husky as if we hadn't used them for a century.

"Well, my lad, that was running close-hauled," said Dick when he had got his throat cleared.

"I hope I may never have such a time of it again as long as I live," I answered. "I could have sworn that fellow saw us, he looked so steadily just where we were lying. But what do you think of our friend, Mr. Fitzroy?"

"What do I think of him," said Dick savagely, for he had a startling depth of passion in him when he was roused; "I can't just in a few words tell ye what I think of him, but I'll tell ye this, if I ketched him alone he'd have to say his prayers mighty quick if he wanted to say them at all."

"Anyway, what we have seen and heard puts our return to Koompupa's kraal out of the question," I said.

"Except to lay low for him," said Dick. "It ain't honourable to let him live. I'm a peaceable man, and have never shed a drop of blood that I know of, but if ever I get the bead on him he'll go down just as sure's there's a sky above us. Aye, if I was to swing sixteen times over for it, and I'm a man with a wife and family."

"He's safe," I said; "you're not likely to get at him."

"Maybe not; but let me tell ye there are lots of cross currents in the sea of life, and sometimes we find ourselves swervin' to a pint we didn't want to touch. Men often go out to make hay and only gather thistles, and sure's I ever meet him I'll be a thistle that'll pierce him to the heart."

I was surprised to hear Dick talk in this fashion after the caution and self-control he had shown, and I said so.

"Well, I value my own life and yours more than the satisfaction of killing him," he replied. "That's the only reason I didn't do it when I had the chance; but, never you fear, he's full of curses and can't come to a good end. The devil has got his mark on him as clear as it ever was on Cain, aye, clearer. Cain had provocation, anyway he was riled, but this little cuss hasn't got anything but his own bad heart."

"Let's go out and see what he's after now, then," I said, for I was terribly anxious to know what was going on.

The first thing I saw when I had crawled out was







a huge black column of smoke coiling up between me and the sun. I told Dick to hurry up and see it. We lay flat on our faces against the few feet of rising ground immediately round the stone and towards our pursuers, and saw all that was going on. They were still busy lighting the fire here and there, and the breeze which had risen some time before carried it swiftly forward. They were shouting and dancing in great glee, doubtless at the thought of roasting us alive, and I couldn't help smiling at the trouble they were giving themselves for nothing. Fitzroy was directly opposite us at a distance of about two hundred and fifty yards.

"Do you think you could bring him down from where you are?" I asked.

Dick got his rifle to his shoulder and took aim.

"I believe I could," he answered. "I could nail him through the back in a spot that would put him from reading any more letters; and if it wasn't for fear of exposing ourselves I'd do it too."

"The natives might take fright and run," I suggested.

"Might is a bad horse to ride," replied Dick, "so we'll just let him alone at present; but never you fear, he's a goner yet."

The fire was spreading rapidly, for the breeze was increasing. It was terrifically beautiful to see how the living thing swept along. Fancy a wide plain with grass six feet high, and dry as an African sun could

make it, with fifty men sedulously setting it on fire, and a breeze to help them. There were now a score or more of smaller columns of smoke curling up for a little independently, then mingling into a mighty cloud that cast the shadow of night while the sun yet shone. The sun, however, would not shine much longer. It was already near the horizon, a red-hot iron globe, in the midst of clouds that seemed in one part tipped with fire and in another bathed in blood. We could catch glimpses of its crimson and purple as the smoke-column beside us bent in the wind. I will not say it was a gorgeous sunset, for the epithet seems cheap and commonplace when applied to it. It was one of those sunsets which can be seen only in Africa, and even in Africa only when nature takes an ostentatious turn. I am not sure that according to our present ideas the picture could be considered artistic, for art and nature have been at loggerheads for some time. Turner might have had the courage to paint it, but none since. And with the earthly and the heavenly fires together the picture would have been awful in its grandeur. It might be hard to say whether the lurid blaze beside us, the hot glow of which we now felt plainly on our faces, or the blaze in the sky was the more impressive. That beside us had a fearful element in the demonism of man. It had been kindled to destroy life; the black (and white) emissaries of the devil could be seen running hither and thither in its light, leaping with joy at the prospect of destruction.



The blaze in the sky had no human wrath in it, yet a touch of imagination might easily convert its terrific splendour into a portent of Divine anger. The rifted and broken clouds hung in bloody masses around the smouldering sun, rising to tints of living fire and sinking to a crimson so deep that it became purple. It was magnificently terrible; such a sky as might have dropped Dante's hail of fire. Between us and it was a range of mountains which alternately glowed in its warm reflection and blackened in the gloom of the smoke which rose from the burning jungle. Bloodier and bloodier grew the sinking sun, steeping the clouds in ever-deepening hues, as if the veins which lent the colours were at last pouring out the rich heart's blood; vaster and vaster grew the flame of the earthly conflagration as if it would mount up to meet in brother-ship the sanguinary orb above. In a little the edge of the sun touched a tall peak and seemed to set it on fire, then dropped out of sight. For a few minutes the crimson clouds retained their colour, then blackened, and night was upon us. Darkness does not descend gently on Africa, but pounces on it. One moment there is a flood of lucent light, the next the fires are extinguished and all is dark. On that particular night it was not dark, however, at least for us; for the fire, spreading with incredible rapidity, presented one long unbroken breastwork of flame, which sent a lurid reflection to the sky and lit up the plain for miles around. We could distinctly see the niggers running

about, and hear them howling and laughing; yet, notwithstanding their presence we forgot for a little our vengeful thoughts in contemplating the grandeur of the conflagration.

"Finer than the burnin' of the *Nelly Gray*," said Dick almost enthusiastically.

"Very fine," I said, roused by the remark; "but fancy you and me in the middle of it, and then tell me how it strikes you."

"Aye, lad, that's the question," said Dick thoughtfully; "and brings us back to business. What's to be done?"

"An easy question to ask, but a deuced hard one to answer," I returned; "but we must do something. It's do or die. Suppose we steal a march on them while they're enjoying themselves at this bonfire they've got up for us."

Dick thought for a while.

"Wouldn't do," he said at length; "that fire will bring them like moths from far and near, and just as likely as not we'd plump right into their arms when we least expected it. My advice is, stick to our hiding-place for a while."

"Upon my word, Dick," I said, "I'd rather have a good fight than pass another minute in that hole. I forgot to ask you whether my hair is gray; but I believe it is, after what I've suffered there already."

"There ain't much the matter with yer hair," said

Dick. "A man whose hair gets gray in an hour ain't in humour for joking about it the next."

And the fact was I was getting into better spirits. I cannot say what the change was owing to; perhaps to the miraculous escape we had had, perhaps to the satisfaction of seeing our hunters beating where there was no quarry. I am certain it was owing to no brightening of the prospect ahead. But be the cause what it might, better I was certainly feeling, as Dick had shrewdly detected. For a short time I almost felt jocular, and would have liked nothing better than to jeer and shout at our pursuers, just to show them how we were triumphing in their defeat. Sterner things, however, soon drove that mood away and brought me back to my old soberness.

"Well, Dick," I said, "are we going back to our hole, or are we going to make a dash for it while our friends are warming themselves?"

"I vote for the hole," said Dick slowly. "We want a rest anyway, and may as well have it there as anywhere else."

Dick had proved himself so firm a friend to me all through that, anxious as I was to leave that detested place, I couldn't find it in my heart to oppose him, so back we went to our hiding-place. Not, however, without a another good look at the fire. I had never seen anything like it. It had now an unbroken line of at least three miles, and was still spreading. I had seen big fires among the Highland hills when the heather

was being burned; but the largest heather-burning I had ever seen was but the glimmer of a taper to this. And our friends were still actively enjoying it. We looked at them in silence for a while, then crept back to our nest.

"Now, you turn in," said Dick; "it's my watch on deck. When you have had a nap you can relieve me."

But hard as I tried I couldn't fall asleep. The wind had changed, and sometimes the smoke came whirling in about us, irritating throat and nostrils. If there's one thing in the world in which will is of no avail, it's in getting to sleep. They say Napoleon could fall asleep whenever he wished. I don't believe it. I believe he never wished to go to sleep until he began to wink in spite of himself, and then of course the thing was easy enough.

"Dick," I said, after lying for a long time with my eyes closed while my mind was painfully wide awake, "it's no use; I can't asleep. You try it if you like, and if you don't, let's cut our stick out of this."

We argued a while, but as Dick was no hand at an argument I soon got the best of it, and altogether against his better judgment we got ready to start. The fire was burning away fiercer than ever, making the whole sky red; and the plain bright. We got cautiously out from the rock, and pausing for a moment to take one long breath and scan the ground before us, we dashed off at our utmost speed. When

we had gone perhaps five hundred yards we fell flat on our faces to recover breath and see if there were any signs of pursuit; luckily there were none.

"A few more runs like that, Dick, and we're all right," I said.

"Aye," said Dick.

We got up again and made another dash, then down again as before; then up and down several times until at length we judged it safe to drop to a lively walk. I was so elated with the success of the enterprise that before I knew what I was about I had broken into a distich I had learned when a boy:

"They sought him east, they sought him west,  
And up and down the brae;  
But ne'er—"

Here Dick roughly thrust his hand over my mouth and pulled me to the ground.

"Lie still and quit yer hollerin'," he said in an excited whisper; "don't ye see them?"

My heart jumped to my mouth as I looked and saw between us and the red sky a band of men standing evidently listening.

"Didn't I tell ye?" muttered Dick.

"It's great satisfaction to be told that now," I said in a tart whisper.

The men stood for a little talking some gibberish in an unknown tongue, then came marching straight toward us. Cold perspiration actually broke out all

over me as I saw them coming deliberately to where we lay. They were about a dozen in number, all armed with spears and shields, which they held in fighting order. They advanced to within twenty feet of us, then retired, then advanced again, and once more retired. It was clear they had not seen us, though without doubt they had heard us, or rather me. Presently they gathered into a knot and held a whispered consultation. Then again they spread themselves out to look for us, and this time one of them came within twelve feet of us. They were all poking round with their spears, and repeating some words to themselves which I took to be an incantation. They searched round in this way, advancing and retiring, for fifteen or twenty minutes; then held another whispered consultation, and to our infinite relief went on their way.

"I ain't agin singin'," said Dick impressively when they were gone; "but it strikes me there are times and places when it don't come in well."

"Dick," I said, "I'm sorry—awfully sorry, but upon my honour I couldn't help it. I was so delighted at our escape from that hole under the stone that the words were out before I could check myself. If we had been killed I couldn't have helped it."

Dick was silent for a little.

"It's all right, lad, it's all right," he said at length, and never again did he breathe a word about the fix my little indiscretion nearly got us into. I have met many men of many nations in my time, but never a

kinder or a truer than Dick Stanley; and one of his chief virtues was that he never spoke of what was past or disagreeable. I know of no rarer virtue, or one that does its possessor or the world more good.

"Faith, that was a close shave after all," I said, wishing to effect a diversion.

"It was," he said, laughing, "a mighty close shave; but we're all right now, and I guess had better set sail and go."

We hurried forward as fast as we could, for we were anxious to get out of the neighbourhood of the fire before daybreak. We talked but little, and I took care not to sing any more. The wind had suddenly fallen, and it was now dead still, with an extraordinary depression of the atmosphere. Although it was near midnight, when things ought to be pretty cool, we were drenched in perspiration.

"There's thunder in the air," said Dick; and he was right, for ere long we heard the first long rumble. My heart smote me for having been so impatient while we were in shelter, for an African thunder-storm is a thing to be avoided in the open. Very soon the lightnings began to play, making the landscape almost as clear as if the time were mid-day. Indeed the flashes came so quickly that they looked like one continuous stream of fire. You couldn't have winked between them. In one way the lightning was of use to us, for it enabled us to walk a great deal faster than we had been doing in the dark. But the bril-



liancy was awful, and made us shudder while it lighted us on. Every hillock, every depression, every little shrub, almost every blade of grass leaped into vision with a vividness that left the retina quivering. Presently the rain came down in sheets; but except for our firearms and ammunition we didn't care much. In fact we rather relished it, because it cooled us. I turned my face up to it, and by opening my mouth got a good drink, a thing I had been fervently longing for. It did not take more than five minutes to drench us to the skin; but what with the lightning and the thunder, and the fear of men and beasts, we were still a long way from happiness. Sometimes I thought I felt a hot smack on the face as a flash of unusual brilliancy shot past; but that might only have been fancy, for my nerves were beginning to get unstrung a bit. Through it all, however, we tramped silently and sturdily on. Dick took the lead with a round swinging gait; and I remember things were so clear that I amused myself by treading exactly in his footsteps. We were just as wet as if wading up to the neck in water; our powder was soaking, too, while there was a stream pouring from the barrels of our guns, as we held them muzzle downwards, like that which runs from the spouting of a house in heavy rain. I don't think two more solitary or forlorn figures existed that night, in all the wide world, than we as we trudged on through those unknown wastes in that deluge of fire and water.

Looking back we could see that the conflagration behind us was dying, and this spurred us on, for we knew that all who had gathered at it would be returning speedily home. Plash, plash we strode along through the gathering pools, speaking never a word, but with the grimmest thoughts that could well fill the hearts of men. I don't know whether or not Dick felt burdened, but the weight of my clothes was beginning to encumber me seriously; and as my socks had long since worn to holes, the wet shoes were tearing the skin off my heels. By and by we came to marshy ground where we had to wade ankle deep in mud and often waist deep. Indeed I believe that if we hadn't been able to pick our way a little by the lightning's aid we should have perished in those quagmires. As it was, I sank once to the arm-pits, and couldn't budge till Dick pulled me out. When I scrambled to my feet I was encased inches deep in mud; but by turning myself deftly to the rain, as one would to a shower-bath, it was soon washed off. I could not help admiring the dexterity with which Dick dodged among the holes. His lurching gait gave the idea that at every step he was keeling over; but somehow or other, in his swinging to and fro he managed to keep his balance in that mysterious way known only to sailors. Happily the marsh was but a narrow strip, and very soon we were out of it and climbing a solid hill. When we gained the ridge we saw that a river swept along the base, and had little difficulty in recognizing it as

the one up which we had sailed but a few days before. The storm was beginning to abate, though the lightning was still shooting as brilliantly as ever. We sat down for a little to consider our plans. Should we swim the river or follow its course to the ocean and take chance of finding shipping there? These were our first questions. But on thinking further of the matter we concluded that since the part of the coast we should reach was haunted by Mauperceau, no other vessels were likely to be there; moreover, we should run the risk of falling in with Ali Kubla. If we followed its course at all, then, it must be the other way. But that would lead us farther into the interior, a thing we were particularly anxious to avoid. To go back was out of the question. There was nothing for it, then, but to cross the river.

"Can you swim well?" asked Dick when we had got thus far.

"I used to swim the Tay," I answered.

"Did you ever swim it in flood?"

"No; but I think I could if I had to."

"Well, I guess this must be six times as big as the Tay; and ye must be pretty sure ye can manage it afore ye try."

"I'll manage it," I said, though on looking across the broad black river as it flashed in the lightning I had my secret misgivings. I wouldn't for the world have said so, however, and we stripped, bundled our clothes and guns on our shoulders and got in. A few feet

from the edge we were swimming, and when we had got in a bit I found the current much stronger than I had calculated upon in so wide a stream. We swam side by side breasting the current, yet not too obstinately for fear of exhausting ourselves. Before we reached the middle I found myself struggling with all my might to keep beside Dick, who seemed to be swimming easily. The fact was that I was far weaker than I had had any idea of myself. I felt my clothes and gun weighing me down. Casting a hasty backward glance I found that they had got into the water; and no sooner had I made this discovery than I felt the cord which bound them tightening uncomfortably round my throat. I put up my hand to give it a tug forward, and as I did this the bundle—clothes and gun—slipped round to my side. I twisted to get it back to its place, lost my balance, and went down over the head. I came up spluttering and sprawling with the wet, heavy bundle about my neck dragging me down. Worse than all, I found that Dick was a good piece above and ahead of me. I had won amateur swimming-races, and was therefore no stranger to the water; yet somehow I lost all my self-confidence, and after splashing wildly for a minute went down again. When I rose the second time I was thoroughly frightened, and screamed to Dick to come and help me. The good fellow at once turned and struck out towards me.

“What’s the matter?” he shouted.

"Drowning!" I shrieked in mortal terror, for I felt myself sinking again.

Two or three gigantic strokes and Dick was supporting me with one hand and swimming with the other. I was as conscious as I am at this moment, but I had lost my self-control; and if we were both to go down on the spot I couldn't swim a stroke. Dick stuck to me like the noble fellow he was. Pray remember that there was a swift current running, that he had his own bundle of clothes to carry, and me to support with my bundle dragging me down. We were going rapidly with the stream though Dick was doing his best, and that is saying a great deal, for he was the most powerful swimmer I ever saw.

"Let me go, Dick, and save yourself," I said, finding we were both being carried away.

"Don't say that again," answered Dick.

"Oh!" I screamed, "I'm taking cramp. Dick, Dick, we'll be drowned."

But Dick answered never a word, only strove the harder with the waters that were sweeping us down. Just then the river swept round a sharp curve, and Dick, by superhuman effort, managed to strike land. When we got ashore I was glad to find that my clothes and gun remained.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AT THE POINT OF DEATH.

BY daybreak the storm was completely over, and the sun came out as hot as ever. It was a blessing it did, for had the weather been cold we must inevitably have perished. Dick put on his clothes, but I didn't—except my shirt, which was little more than a handful of ribbons dangling from my neck—for the warm beams of the sun were more grateful on my skin than the dripping clothes. We sat for a long time without much talk, staring gloomily into the river that had so nearly swept us to death.

"Ain't you going to dress?" asked Dick at length, eyeing my bare limbs.

"It's more to my liking to go naked than have steaming clothes flapping about me," I answered curtly.

Without a word Dick got up and spread them on a bush to dry; then returning to where I sat he got what remained of the meat.

"I can't eat the disgusting thing," I said testily. "I'd rather die than eat it."

"No, ye wouldn't."



"Yes, I would."

"No, ye wouldn't. I know ye wouldn't; so don't talk silly."

Now I was just exhausted enough to have lost interest in life for the time being; and vigorous enough to be fretful and peevish. Besides I was ashamed of myself for having given up so easily in the river, and, like an ill-tempered boy, showed my anger where I should have shown my gratitude, though in my heart I loved Dick as a brother.

"Perhaps you know best," I said saucily; "but not a morsel of that stuff will pass my throat at present, and you needn't ask me."

I got up and walked about, and a pretty figure I must have cut with my bare legs and strips of shirt. Dick did not say any more, but swallowed a few mouthfuls of the meat himself, and rolled the rest carefully in his handkerchief. I cannot describe how I felt, for I scarcely knew myself, except that I was in a dreadful passion at things in general. As I was walking about Dick went to the bush and turned over my clothes, and the action stabbed me like a sword.

"You needn't mind those things," I called out to him. "I don't care if they never dry. I don't care if I never put them on again. The world's going against me anyway, and I don't care if I die." I was ready to cry with indignation and spite.

Seeing, I suppose, that it would be useless to talk to me, Dick went on spreading out every fold of my



clothes to the sun. As he did so my mother's Bible slipped from one of my pockets. He picked it up and began turning over its leaves. I stood watching him for a second as mad as I could be. I knew I was cutting a very ridiculous figure, that I was guilty of the basest of all sins—ingratitude; yet the consciousness, instead of making me humble and penitent, was only fuel to my anger. I couldn't have been angry with Dick, but I was angry first with myself, then with the whole world afterwards. I strode sullenly over to where Dick was standing.

"This book is a bit wet too," he said quietly looking up.

"Give it to me," I said, rudely snatching it out of his hand; and with the precious little volume crushed almost to pulp in my grip, I stalked away like a bursting turkey-cock. By and by my anger subsided a bit, but I found myself suddenly grown strangely sick. At one time I felt a buzzing dizziness in my head, at other times a lightness; while my feet seemed to be encased in clogs of lead. At the same time I was alternately burning with heat and shivering with cold, though the air was as warm as a Turkish bath. Dick must have detected my condition, for presently he came to me with a couple of quinine pills he had about him, and insisted on my taking them. I believe he would have forced them down my throat if I had refused. Then he put off his own comparatively dry trousers, which he peremptorily ordered me to put on, after

which he led me away to the shade of some bushes where we lay silently down. After some shivering I fell into a troubled asleep. I must have slept for a long time, however, for when I awoke the shadows were stretching to the eastward. Dick had my head and face covered with his handkerchief, and when I started up rubbing my eyes he was sitting stolidly beside me keeping watch.

"Well, lad, that was a good nap," he said cheerily. "Ye have had a good seven hours of it. Perhaps ye'll have a bit of meat now, for yer belly must be mighty empty."

At the mention of meat a terrible fear came over me. I could not recall all that had passed, but I knew I had said ugly undeserved things to Dick; that, in fact, I had not only made a fool of myself, but had wantonly insulted my very best friend. To gain a little time for thinking quietly I signified that I would take a bit of meat. With an alacrity and delight that almost brought the tears to my eyes, Dick produced his little store and held it out to me. But I couldn't eat. My sickness of body and perplexity of mind were too great for that. I saw myself with part of Dick's clothes on. I saw his rugged benevolent face beaming with joy at seeing me well awake again; and I sat there self-condemned, the blackest condemnation a man can have. To go on as if nothing had occurred would have been the best way, but that I couldn't do. By nature I am one of those unfortunate individuals

who must either be at perfect peace with a man, or at open and declared enmity. I must, therefore, either make it up with Dick, or quarrel with him outright.

"Dick," I said, laying down the meat, "I'm all bamboozled in the head since that half drowning I got in the river, and haven't a very clear recollection of things, but I know I have been saying things I shouldn't say. I can't tell what they were. I only remember that I was raging mad, and when I am mad everybody suffers; that there were dancing lights before my eyes, and that I seemed to be hacking and hewing the whole world. I know I have insulted you; but man, Dick, I liked you all the while."

"Ye are dreamin', lad," said Dick in a shaky voice. "Ye are dreamin'; upon my word ye are. Give yerself a pinch, and waken up. Ye never insulted me; no—no—never. And now just eat that bit of meat; it's not very tasty, but it's the best we have, and a man don't live long on air."

Now that I had got my mind eased I ate with relish, and felt wonderfully refreshed.

"There's not much there now," I said, handing back the little that remained.

"Never mind, we can get fresh meat now," said Dick. "We've got the powder dry and the guns, and there's bound to be game about here."

"And what's to be done now?" I said.

"Well, we'll just rest in some handy place till you

get up yer strength a bit, then make tracks for the coast."

We crept to some taller bushes that were near by, and then sat down again. Dick slept an hour or two, and I kept guard. Then I slept and he kept guard; and so on till next morning, when we resumed our march.

After a brisk walk of several hours we entered one of the most beautiful countries I have ever seen anywhere. It was a vast plain stretching away without limit apparently to the horizon, and bearing a grass so rich and luxuriant that the very sight of it cheered me. I could not help thinking how much some of the struggling British farmers would give to be able to stick their ploughs into it. We tramped on till perhaps eleven o'clock, then sat down to rest. Here we ate the last of our dried meat, and, unsavoury as it had come to be to us, we were sorry when it was done. We started again as soon as we could bear the heat and about five o'clock in the evening, as near as we could gather, sighted a magnificent herd of zebras and ostriches. They were the first of either I had ever seen, and I was wild with excitement to get a shot at them. But though we crept on cautiously on our hands and knees, the long-necked birds saw us, and giving the alarm the whole lot scampered off. Near sundown Dick got a shot at an antelope but missed it, and when darkness came on we had to lie down supperless. It was a night without sleep for either of us, for we were

literally in the midst of beasts of prey, and I wonder to this day how they didn't scent us.

Once or twice we heard the trumpeting of an elephant, and many times the roar of the lion and the snapping growl of the leopard; and many times too our heart stood still as we heard the grass rustling close to us, and perhaps a low growl, as our enemies prowled about. We were almost as much afraid to speak as we had been under the stone, and were not sorry when day again dawned and the noises gradually died away. Breakfastless as we had been supperless we resumed our weary march. By noon we got into a wooded country, where the glare of the sun was not quite so piercing as on the plain. But if we suffered less from heat we suffered more from hunger and thirst, which were beginning to torture us terribly. I was dead tired, too, and in ill humour; and it was only by constant watching that I managed to keep up even a semblance of politeness towards my companion. But at every fresh trial I admired Dick more and more. You could not have known from his talk or manner that he was undergoing any exceptional fatigue, or that he hadn't eaten anything for four and twenty hours. Nay, it seemed to me that the hungrier and thirstier he got the merrier he got. He was not a facetious fellow as a rule, but that day he never ceased joking, though there could have been little merriment in his heart.

We travelled all day without a morsel of food or a

drop of drink, save a mouthful of inky fluid we sucked from the mud of a stinking marsh. I say travelled, but as to myself it would be more correct to say that I staggered and limped, for I was so sick and weary that I went like a drunken man with my legs bending under me. My feet, too, were raw flesh, and couldn't endure my shoes. During the afternoon we saw both fowl and antelope, but got a shot at neither; so that when night fell we had again to lie down supperless. We had now been thirty hours without a bite of food, undergoing severe bodily fatigue under a broiling sun, and without sleep at night. It is unnecessary to enlarge on our miseries, for it wouldn't be a pleasant description. Dick took another quinine pill, and handed me one; and with that meal we laid our heads on mother earth. Perhaps in all her long existence she never bore on her breast two more wretched children.

In the early part of the night I dozed for a little, but only to live over again in fancy all the horrors of the past. It was a positive relief to sit up and listen to the clamours of the beasts of prey. I suppose it was very wicked, but I secretly prayed they might come and put an end to our sufferings. Even beasts of prey, however, would seem to shun misery; and in the morning we started to crawl forward again. Dick gave me his arm, and by deed and word encouraged me; but with all his assistance and encouragement I felt I must soon lie down and die. My limbs were actually twisting under me, and more than once I should have been



on my knees if Dick hadn't held me up by main force. At last I stumbled against something and we both fell, and I saw then that Dick, as well as myself, was pretty far through. He was up again in an instant, however, pulling me to my feet; but I had no strength to help myself, and hadn't the heart to encumber the kind fellow any more.

"No, Dick," I said; "let me lie here, I'm done up. You can't carry me any further, for you are tired as well as I; but if you can carry yourself a bit further you might go forward and see if you fall in with any huts. Perhaps there may be some blacks who would not kill us. I can take care of myself here, and if you don't return I'll know you couldn't. There now, go forward like a good fellow to please me."

"No, lad. If you stay here I stay too," he blurted out after a pause.

"It's only to die then, Dick," I said.

"Well, well," said Dick with simulated gaiety. "I like company, and if I went forward I'd have to die alone; so I'll just stay where I am."

There did not seem to be any other fate for us but to die where we were. A few hours and all should be over, and some later traveller might find our bleaching bones, if in the meantime they had not been gnawed to powder by wild beasts; and if the finder were a sufficiently expert anatomist he might make out that they had belonged to white men. But it is a true proverb—which I have often verified in my own experience—that



the darkest hour is just before the dawn, and our escape shows that in the direst plight people should never lose heart. It may seem to the reader that we might have saved ourselves a great deal of needless pain and fatigue if we had quietly lain down the day before as we were doing to-day, since death was overtaking us in any case. But, as things turned out, it will be seen that had we lain down the day before we should certainly have perished; nay, if we had lain down but half a mile short of the spot we were on we should have perished. Destiny takes a wide sweep, and seems careless sometimes, but she works out the smallest detail unerringly; and in our case one of her details was to bring us precisely to the spot where we lay. And this is how we were saved. Sometime during the afternoon Dick espied some men prowling about, and rousing me urged me to make an effort to get forward a bit into deeper wood. I did make the effort, but they saw us and gave chase, and of course from their superior strength and fleetness soon came up to us. As they came near I was straining every nerve, and stumbling in my weakness fell flat on my face. I closed my eyes and lay still, for I expected to be instantly transpierced by a spear; but as time passed and nothing touched me I ventured to look round. The sight I saw somewhat astonished me. There, about six yards off, was an African standing with his mouth wide open and his spear poised in his hand, evidently in much greater fright than I.

Seeing that he hesitated I took courage to speak to him, and at the first sound of my voice he raised a shout and fled back to his companions, whom he had outrun. Behind me stood Dick with his gun levelled. The savages, however, disregarding him, came boldly up to where we were, all except the man to whom I had spoken, who stood at a distance looking at us as if we were uncanny beings. His friends crowded grinningly round us, but with a curious rather than a murderous mien. We both tried to speak to them, but they paid little attention to us, being too busy criticising our several points. At length, when they had quieted down a bit, Dick fell to making gestures, indicating we were hungry by opening his mouth and pointing his finger in, and by tapping the pit of his stomach. Then he pointed to me, and by feigning to fall endeavoured to make them understand I had sunk from exhaustion. After a while two of them held out their spears to us, which we grasped and shook in a friendly way; then they turned the sharp points upon themselves and made signs as if to inquire whether we wanted to kill them, at which we both shook our heads as vigorously as we could. Then shouldering their spears in military fashion they made a circle round us. Some brass buttons that were about my clothes presently attracted their notice, so I whipped out my knife and bestowed one on each as far as they went. Then we held out our right hands to them, which they took but did not shake, for hand-shaking is a

ceremony unknown to them. But as a token of amity they rubbed their arms against ours, then their noses against ours. These greetings being over and their curiosity satisfied they made signs that they wished us to march along with them. But Dick again signified, by pointing to my bleeding feet, that I couldn't walk, whereupon they seemed much concerned, and crowded in to examine my wounds. As if to express sympathy one man held up the sole of his own foot, which was suppurating from a thorn that lodged in it. There was not much savagery about those men. I only wish that my own countrymen were all as kind at heart.

All this time I had been sitting on the ground, and had grown so stiff and sore that when I tried to move again I suffered the most excruciating agony. With the aid of Dick's arm, however, I managed to rise and limp along.

The sun was nearing the horizon when we reached the kraal, which was distant about three miles from the spot at which they had discovered us. Our arrival was immediately reported to the king, who came out with a body-guard to meet us. I at once remarked the contrast between him and Koompupa. Like that monarch he was stark naked, except for the common girdle round the waist; but, unlike him, there was a nobility in his bearing which at once proclaimed his superiority. He had not the hideous, filed teeth nor the bloody eye of Koompupa, yet there was an expression

of power about him that gave one the idea he would be an ugly customer in a fight. As a matter of fact he was one of the handsomest men I ever set eyes on. He must have been nearly seven feet tall, broad and strong in proportion, and straight as his own spear.

He was attended by three of his principal officers of state, one of whom had in his youth served in an exploring expedition with some Englishmen, and had thus picked up a smattering of the English tongue. So that happily he was able to interpret. The king on coming forward put some questions concerning our country, our mission, and the reason for our present desolate condition, which we answered as best we could. Then he examined us both minutely, after which he rubbed his nose and right arm against ours, and informed us that Humanna the mighty, the terror of his enemies, the wielder of the thunder and the shooter of the lightning, king of the great and invincible Manuha nation, the conquerors of the earth, took us to his heart. That pleasing intelligence conveyed, and acknowledged on our part with all the possible signs of humility and gratitude, we were invited to the royal hut, where a dish of rice and milk was served to us. Never in this world did meat taste so sweet as that, though the cooks and waiters, in point of cleanliness, might not pass muster in a British hotel.

The report soon spread that two white men had arrived in town, and the whole population flocked out to look at us. We learned that their curiosity was not

entirely on our account, for a white man had visited the place some time before, and the cry had arisen that he had returned. From the descriptions we received I made little doubt the man was David Livingstone.

When we had finished our meal the king called his medicine man to wash and bind my feet, which he did with a skill and tenderness that surprised me.

Presently Humanna began to ask us many questions, which we contrived to answer to his satisfaction. Then he told us that he was going to cross the big river in canoes to make war on the wicked Koompupa because he had stolen some of his cattle; and when we told him that we were flying from that cruel monarch he would have hugged us like brothers had we shown an inclination to be fraternal.

"I am glad," said he, "that the white man is come. He will help me, and the wicked Koompupa and his nation shall be swept off the face of the earth."

We replied that we would gladly assist him; and when we retired that night it was to dream of being revenged on all our enemies. But our dream was suddenly disturbed, as the next chapter will show.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### A FEARFUL CALAMITY, AND WHAT IT REVEALED.

PEN cannot describe the scene that presented itself when Dick and I were hurled from our beds, for hurled we literally were. The whole town was reeling and dancing, huts were toppling over, and the distracted people running hither and thither screaming in mortal terror. So great were the din and confusion that we could not immediately make out what was happening, and no sooner did we appear than the people crowded round us shouting:

“Kill them! kill them! they have brought destruction on us. Let your spears drink their blood. Down with the evil white men!”

And it should have gone hard with us if the king, with great courage and presence of mind, had not interfered in our behalf. Nevertheless, he seemed to share the general suspicion of us himself, for when the crowd had gone off screaming to another quarter he turned sharply to us and said:

“What is this evil ye have brought upon us? The earth reeleth like a drunken man, so that the huts fall,



and men walk not on their legs but stumble on their faces. Have ye witches at work to destroy us?"

"Nay, my lord," I answered, now fully aware we were in the midst of an earthquake; "this is not the doing of man nor the doing of witches, but the doing of the great God who made the earth and holdeth it in his hand as a grain."

In the moment that the interpreter had done translating, and before the king could reply, a violent tremor ran through the earth beneath us, and we were thrown on our faces, where we lay for an instant paralysed. When we staggered to our feet again we saw to our horror the centre of the town rise like a gigantic green-crested wave, dotted with black spots, then curl forward and crash into the yawning abyss that had opened below, carrying with it at least half a thousand people. Again a crowd came reeling towards us shouting that we were wizards come to destroy them; and it is lucky they were not armed, for if they had been, not even the king could have kept them off us. While they clamoured round us the earth shook with another spasm, rose into a huge wave near the same spot as before, which, trembling for an instant as if uncertain whether to advance or recede, broke and toppled into the gulf beneath. The people, awed into mute terror, watched it till it plunged out of sight, then, finding their voices, again rushed off, a shrieking, solid mass, to get as far away from us as possible. But there was no escape for the doomed wretches, for another wave



caught them as they ran, whirled them dizzily aloft, then in the twinkling of an eye sank, carrying hundreds of them with it. Those that remained stood for a little rooted to the spot, then, with one united instinct, turned and fled to the top of a neighbouring height, passing us again on the way. Dumfounded and horrified, we too turned mechanically and followed them. But the worst was yet to come. Scarcely had we gained the crest of the hill when a series of half a dozen shocks came in such quick succession that you couldn't have counted five between each. For about a minute and a half the town below us reeled and tossed like a fleet in the utmost commotion of the sea, then rose steadily upward till it resembled a mighty dome of ten thousand times the dimensions of St. Paul's, many of the wrecked huts which had already been ingulfed being clearly discernible. For perhaps the space of two seconds it stood poised in the air, then, sudden as a flash of lightning, fell plumb and disappeared.

The king watched the whole thing without a word, or a single gesture or utterance indicating fear or consternation. But the despair of those of his people who remained was simply agonizing. I remember being struck with the fact that in the indescribable scene which followed the untutored savages acted precisely as civilized people would have acted. Mothers screamed for their children and children for their mothers. Strong men beat their breasts and threw themselves on the ground like maniacs.

We were not above a quarter of a mile from the town, so that it—or rather the place where it had been—lay clearly in view, and we could see that not a hut nor a living creature remained. Everything animate and inanimate had gone down into the bowels of the earth. The fact that nothing was left, however, did not prevent the people from going down when they found the ground steady again, and had partially recovered self-possession. But they descended only to return with renewed wailings and lamentations over the complete destruction of their town.

As Dick and I were still supposed to be in some mysterious manner responsible for the calamity that had befallen them, and were therefore for the time being the objects of animosity, our position was by no means enviable. But the king, with that good sense which we afterwards found distinguished him, had banished all suspicions from his mind, and, perceiving the temper of his people, took us under his personal protection.

In referring to the catastrophe, he told us that he did not care for himself, but that it lay heavy on his heart to lose so many of his people, and to see those who remained stricken with such a poignant grief. And it was evident from the deferential way in which they gathered round him that they looked up to him as a father and helper. Nor was it in vain.

“My children,” he said, addressing them when they were quiet enough to listen, “a great calamity hath this day befallen us. Last night we lay down, each

man the lord of his own hut; this morning we raised our eyes to look upon destruction and death. We know not what hath caused it, but this know and believe, my children, that my friends, the white men, are innocent, for it lieth not in man to stir the earth with such anger as we have seen. We have all been bereaved—you have and I have, and our hearts are full of sorrow and anguish, for our children were buried alive before our eyes; yet have we escaped with our lives, and ought we not to cease our lamentations and thank the Great Spirit that we are still alive to fight our enemies. We are not entirely bereft and hopeless. We will leave this place and go to another city—even to fair Zanaro, where the earth is not one big sepulchre of those we love, and where we will build up our empire afresh. Speak I right, my children?"

"Yea, verily, the king is ever right!" came in a great shout from every throat in the assembly.

"The wreck has been most complete. Let us not make our hearts heavy by gazing upon it; let us away to establish ourselves in the earth anew. Speak I right, my children?"

"Yea, verily, the king is ever right!" came again from the whole multitude.

"Let us go, then," said the king; "but I charge you, do no harm to these white brothers of mine, for I know of a surety they are innocent."

"As the king willeth it shall be done, and as the king willeth it shall not be done!" came again.

It was marvellous to see the effect of those rude words on that rude people. But Humanna was a born leader, who spoke more with his eye than with his tongue, and more with character than with either.

In a little while the whole company, consisting of several regiments of warriors, some old men, and many women and children, was on the march to found new homes; and I was much affected to see the quietness and noble courage of their behaviour.

Zanaro was a small village about eight miles distant from the sunken capital, and we reached it in about two hours and a half. The people, who were alarmed though they had suffered no injury, came flocking out to meet us. The king made a short address to them, telling them how Wanamoona and all it contained had been swallowed, and that Zanaro was to be henceforth the capital.

The villagers prostrated themselves before his majesty with fervent expressions of loyalty and thanks for so honouring them. There was no useless palavering, however. We all set to work energetically, some to build huts, some to hunt for food and skins. For a full fortnight we were at it almost night and day. By the end of that period we had a handsome town of huts, into which Dick and myself were able to introduce some improvements that pleased the king and people immensely.

When the building was done Dick and I fell into a life of laziness. It was grateful at first, but a few

days served to make it irksome, for we were both of active habits. One day, while moping about thinking what I could do to kill time, it struck me to go back and have a look at the ruins of Wanamoona. Dick approved of the adventure when I spoke to him about it, and on the first opportunity I got the king's permission to go. He wanted to send an escort with us, but we wouldn't hear of it, assuring his majesty we could take care of ourselves for a day.

We started about five o'clock one morning, and by nine got to the hill overlooking the sunken city. Here we sat for a little to rest and have a quiet look down. Presently Dick prosaically remarked—for with all his excellent qualities Dick was as devoid of poetic feeling as a stone—that after all it was only a big hole in the earth, that he had seen both bigger and grander, and that, for his part, he didn't see why we should bother going any farther; but a little coaxing from me overcame his indifference, and we went down.

The pit was oblong in shape. At the end towards us it was six or eight feet deep, and gradually sank till at the remoter end it attained a depth of at least three hundred feet. As we could thus easily scramble out again, we leaped down. The soft earth yielded below us like a loosely ploughed stubble field. It was not pleasant walking in itself, and the associations did not improve it. When I had waded forward perhaps twenty yards or so, my foot struck against something solid about two inches from the surface, which I had

little doubt was a human body. Scarcely had I pulled up my foot when I started back from the glare of a pair of wild eyes. The wretched owner had been caught up to the neck and crushed to death, probably with his eyes looking at his retreating companions. Soon we came upon part of another body, and part of yet another; in fact, as we proceeded farther in, the bodies were getting thick. Sometimes the back lay bare, while head and legs were underground; sometimes a single arm was thrust up imploringly to heaven; at other times both feet were up, indicating that the unlucky owner had gone head-foremost into the gulf. Indeed, we were now literally making stepping-stones of them. The excessive heat was beginning to cause an unwholesome odour, which, together with the ghastliness of the scene, made me anxious to be off. I was just on the point of turning to fly when, chancing to look up, my eyes were dazzled by a glittering of the bank above me. I looked again before speaking to make sure that it wasn't the sun that was in my eyes; but no, there was something shining there for certain.

"Dick," I said, "are my eyes deceiving me, or is there something glittering in that bank of earth?"

Dick shaded his eyes with his hands and looked, then rubbed them very hard and looked again.

"Why, blame my skin, I believe it's gold!" he exclaimed.

I was afraid to look up lest he should be mistaken.



"Look again," I said, "and don't speak until you're sure."

Again the gnarled hands went over his eyes, and he glanced upward, while I, with palpitating heart, stared resolutely into the ground. With the corner of my eye I saw him lower his hands. What was the verdict? He did not speak, however, and the hands went up again.

"It's gold!" he exclaimed again. "It's gold, lad—sure's I'm born it's gold!"

At this I ventured to raise my eyes, and there, without mistake, was the yellow ore glittering in the sun. I don't think I was more frightened at any part of my adventures than in that moment.

"Dick, what's to be done?" I said.

"Done?" he repeated. "Why, claim the whole thing, of course!"

"But our claim won't be respected. We're in the heart of Africa," I answered.

Yes, there was a difficulty about it, and it took us a long time to decide what to do. We had joked about discovering gold, and here it was when we least expected it—ours, nobody else knew anything about it. But how the deuce were we to profit by our discovery? That was the question.

"Anyway, let's get up and feel it with our hands," said Dick.

But even that was not easy, for the bright patch was at least ten feet from the ground, in a crumbling bank

that broke away with us when we tried to climb. Again and again we went at it, and again and again fell back unsuccessful.

"Are we going to be beaten?" said Dick.

"Wait," I said. "Since I'm the lighter of the two let me get on your shoulders; perhaps I can scramble up from there."

Accordingly I mounted Dick's shoulders, and had the satisfaction of—just touching the lower edge of the gold with the tips of my fingers. I strained to reach farther, and sent Dick down into the soft mould.

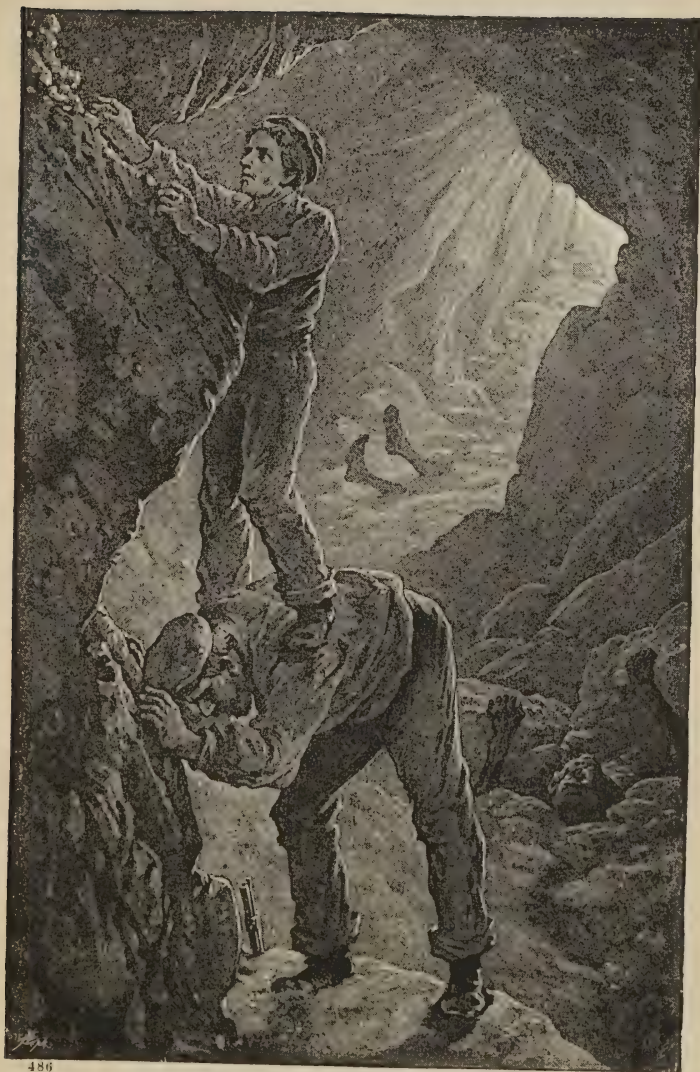
"Stop that, or you'll bury me alive like the other fellows," he called out.

I had to jump down without a grain of the ore. We both scratched our heads and looked up pretty much as the fox in the fable looked up at the grapes.

"I have it," said Dick suddenly. "Let's scrape up a lot of earth and tramp it hard, so that I can stand on it; then you can mount my shoulders again."

We accordingly gathered a large heap of earth with our hands, tramped it down, threw up more, tramped down again, and so on tramping down and throwing up till we had a solid platform several feet high. Dick got on it, and in wild excitement I again mounted his shoulders. My face was fairly opposite the yellow mass, into which I stuck my hand, and pulling it out full of heavy nuggets, leaped down.

"See, Dick—see!" I cried excitedly. "Pure gold;





our fortunes are made. We're independent men for life!"

Dick did not reply, but held out his hand to feel the precious metal for himself. He turned it over and over, examining it and re-examining it, as if to assure himself that it really was gold.

"We have struck a regular lead," he said at length with some emotion. "That earthquake has thrown open the end of it. By golly, I wish I had it in Ameriky!"

"And I in England," I said. "But that's not the question at present; there it is, and how are we to get it away?"

"That's the bothersome pint," said Dick thoughtfully, handing back the nuggets; "that's the pint—how are we to get it away?"

We had been in many a fix, but, as the priest in Marmion says, "never aught like this." In fact for a while it seemed as if our discovery was to be of no benefit to us. We couldn't carry the whole thing away, for, according to the most modest calculation we could make, there were tons upon tons of gold in the vein; and we had no friends to whom we could confide the secret till we could procure proper aid. We began to be sorely troubled, and for the first time in my life I understood something of the bother of riches. If we hadn't made the discovery we should have been quite happy, but having made it we were exquisitely miserable. To collect our thoughts we sat

down for a while on our platform and looked up at the glittering gold. There it was, as bright as the sovereigns from the mint—but what was to be done with it? To carry it away was manifestly beyond our power. With our own unaided strength, indeed, we might be able to make off with ore to the value of a few thousands sterling; but we had suddenly grown ambitious, and what twenty-four hours before would have seemed a fortune to us was now scarce worth considering.

“Well,” said I at length, as we were unable to evolve any satisfactory plan, “let’s pull some more out anyway. It’s pleasant to have our hands in it if we shouldn’t take it with us.”

Again I got on Dick’s shoulders and rolled down a mass of nuggets on the ground. These we gathered into a heap, and resumed our seat to contemplate them.

“Dick, old boy,” I said, “I think that’s the prettiest sight we have seen yet.”

“Ay, lad,” said Dick with a smile; “but ’tain’t of much use to us there.”

There was no gainsaying so obvious a fact, and once more we fell into silence, trying to think out some scheme of utilizing our discovery.

“I think the best thing we can do,” said Dick at length, “is to bury this heap, close up the vein so as none can see the gold, and wait a better chance. We hev had worse friends than Humanna, and worse quarters than the Zanaro huts, and we can wait.”



"I suppose you're right," I said; "but, man, it's hard to have a gold mine you can't draw on. If ever we get this away, Dick, we can do just what we like; and now, as there's nothing better to be done, let's to work."

With that we began to scoop out a pit for the heap beside us; and that safely out of sight—except a few nuggets we couldn't help putting in our pockets—we filled up the mouth of the vein. Then we carefully covered up the bodies that were exposed, so that they might not attract attention and thus lead to the discovery of our treasure. Having no implements but our hands, it took us many hours to do all this; and when we had finished two frouzier animals could hardly have been seen, for we looked exactly as if we had been trying to burrow holes for ourselves in the earth. At last, after a very careful look round to see that all was securely hidden, we got out of the pit and made our way back to Zanaro, where a new and startling situation awaited us.





## CHAPTER XX.

### A BATTLE IN WHICH WE ARE REVENGED ON OUR ENEMIES.

THE situation was this. Koompupa, hearing of the misfortune which had befallen his enemy Humanna, and judging, not altogether without reason, that that potentate's power was hopelessly crippled, had thought the occasion a convenient and fitting one to make a fresh foray upon the cattle of the Manuhas. In this raid, which had been attempted during our short absence, the thieves had been detected and a sharp skirmish had followed, without, however, any decided advantage on either side, save that the rightful owners kept their cattle. This new aggravation, added to many injuries already received at the hands of the Koompupas, so incensed Humanna and his people that, at an impromptu council of war, it was firmly resolved to make reprisals and inflict exemplary punishment at once; and already messengers were scouring the country to assemble the troops from the outlying depôts.

Among the people the commotion was intense as

they ran hither and thither shouting for vengeance, and even the chief officers of state were somewhat excited; but Humanna bore himself with the calm and lofty resolution of a warrior-king conscious of setting an example.

"The calamity which hath made death more familiar than life," he said to us, "and the lamentation which filleth the land like a howling wind, had put war from my mind. But grief suiteth not always, and there is a point at which patience ceaseth to be a virtue. My nation is wronged, my might set at nought, my dignity trampled upon. I will be revenged."

The interpreter translated; and we replied that it became his kingly function to crush the aggressor.

"My white brothers shall lend me their mighty aid," he resumed; "and we will make Koompupa and his nation as the dust which the wind licketh up and streweth over the lifeless desert—yea, as the water which the thirsty ground drinketh and no man seeth again. My brothers, speak I right?"

Now, though Dick and I cherished no fraternal feelings towards Koompupa and some of his friends, and zealously approved of their being whipped, circumstances had arisen which made it awkward for us to take any prominent part in the whipping ourselves; so that we would gladly have declined the proposed distinction. But our honour being at stake we could do nothing less than declare our perfect readiness to fight, and, if necessary, die for Humanna and his cause.

A beam of joy lit up his dusky face upon hearing our answer translated.

"We will be avenged," he said firmly. "We will wipe out our enemies as a dog wipeth a dish with his tongue."

Just then a great shout rose from the people, and hastening out of the royal hut in which we had been since our return, found the first of the summoned regiments marching into the town. The home troops were drawn up to receive it, and cheered lustily as their comrades bravely advanced with that elastic gait peculiar to unshod savages. The incoming regiment saluted with a military precision that would have done no discredit to civilized troops, and returned the cheer. The king stood quietly beside us, but I thought his frame expanded and his stature increased as he looked at the stalwart warriors who had responded so promptly to his call.

"Welcome, children!" he said, stepping proudly out to meet them when they had come up. "Ye have not tarried when called. A great work awaiteth you and great glory."

"Great is the king," replied the soldiers, flourishing their spears. "His right arm smiteth and none can withstand. He is as the lightning that killeth in the darkness and cannot be called to account."

Presently another regiment was observed some distance off on the other side, and again spears whirled in the air and a ringing shout of welcome arose, in

which women and children joined heartily. The advancing regiment returned the cheer, and came forward at the double. When it halted the king welcomed it as he had welcomed the first, and his greeting was returned in the same loyal fashion as before.

After this the regiments came in in quick succession, but not too quickly, to be each greeted by the king with words of praise and encouragement. At length the force was reported complete, with a complement of ten regiments of 1500 men each, or 15,000 in all. They were put through some evolutions, then formed into a dense semicircle, and the king made a short and soldier-like address.

"Warriors and chiefs," he said, "lift your hearts that ye may reap glory, for in this day are ye called to be avengers. The enemy hath been bold, and, thinking your calamities had laid you in the dust, hath been at your gate to plunder. In times past hath he done grievous wrong, but this surpasseth all his evil deeds. But his power shall cease, and your spears shall be washed in his blood. Your children's children shall hear of your deeds, and shall be sorrowful because they were not born to share them. Yours shall be the glory of a conquest the fame of which shall not fade. Warriors and chiefs, are you ready?"

"Ready, oh king!" came vociferously from the vast body.

When the king had thus spoken the men fell out for rations, for which there had been a great slaughtering

of oxen earlier in the day. While the men were eating, a couple of brigadiers, the commanders of regiments, with the interpreter, Dick, and myself, retired with the king to a final consultation. It was agreed that we should march at sundown, now fast approaching, cross the river in the night, and attack Koompupa at dawn on the morrow. Our plan was, if possible, to surprise him, capture his capital, and drive away his cattle as legitimate spoil of war. No quarter was to be shown his warriors, but women and children were to be protected from personal violence. These arrangements completed, the king invested himself with his harness of war, which consisted of a sort of skull-cap with three eagle plumes in it, and a richly-wrought girdle, distinguished from his ordinary girdle by carrying a dirk or dagger with a carved ivory handle, for fighting at close quarters when the spear was no longer available. His officers assumed a similar regalia, save that their daggers had handles of buffalo-horn, and that the brigadiers had two plumes, and the colonels of regiments only one apiece. Dick and I were pressed to don war-girdles and plumes—decorations which we politely declined as incompatible with our otherwise civil appearance. Then the king and his officers seized their spears and their shields, and we all emerged to the music of a deafening cheer.

The commanders of regiments at once took up their posts, and, having seen that their men carried the regulation rations in their girdles, the order was given and



the troops wheeled into line. At sight of this the people went fairly wild with excitement; and I must say that the spectacle of the 15,000 grim and stalwart warriors standing erect and motionless under a gleaming forest of spears, each with his shield conspicuous on his left arm, was such as might well evoke enthusiasm anywhere. Presently, as the sun was nearing the horizon, the king, his plumes flashing scarlet in the evening light, stepped back a few paces, cast his eye along the crowded columns, then returning to his place again gave the word of command, and the dense dark mass moved swiftly off.

"Victory to the great Humanna!" shouted the people.

"Victory shall be his!" responded the soldiers.

Then a vociferous cheer rose in the rear, sank, swelled again, and at length died away with a long-drawn half-plaintive cadence. With one impulse the troops whirled their spears in the air and gave a cheer that seemed to rebound from the sky. Then silence and falling darkness, in which every man settled grimly down to his work.

There was something weird, solemn, awe-inspiring in that silent march of a savage army into the bosom of the dark night. The dull thud of the falling feet seemed, indeed, to shake the earth beneath us; yet all was strangely still, and the solid moving mass, briefly outlined against the darkening horizon, was almost horrible in its suggestiveness. The funereal

procession glided so swiftly along that Dick and I found our breath coming hard and fast in the strain of maintaining the pace. Not a word was spoken even by commanders, as if speech were a dissipation of energy; and after the night had grown completely black, and nothing at all was to be seen and nothing was to be heard save the rhythmic thud, thud, thud of the tramping host, I must confess to feeling a creepy, chilly sensation in the spine and about the roots of the hair. It did not last long, for I shook it off; but that the situation was eerie was a fact which philosophy might ridicule but was powerless to alter. I could not well make out how we held our course, for we were walking in blank darkness, and concluded that savages, like horses and dogs, have a guiding instinct in the night.

Presently the moon rose, glinting on the spears and lighting up the vast level plain we were traversing; but things still retained their weird unreality, and more than once I suspected myself of walking in a dream. The nocturnal noises of savagedom—now a roar, now a sharp yelp, anon a howling as of a beaten kennel, then a moaning cry as of a human being in acute agony, and again a combination of all these sounds—now got up about us. But these were nothing, and the swift silent movement went unceasingly on.

By and by we passed through a tract of tall grass, where the wild beasts made way before our aggressive thud, thud with howling protests that made the blood

run cold; and soon after we came upon a piece of broken ground, part wood, part marsh, where we had to open out. But nothing diminished our speed; and at length, after a march of some thirty-five miles, occupying about seven hours, we came suddenly upon the gleaming river and halted for a mouthful of food.

In considerably less time than it takes an English gentleman to eat his dinner all were ready again, and with the word of command the front rank promptly descended into the water. Happily there was a wide and natural ford at the place, so that we were saved the delay of using canoes. Humanna, however, had a large fleet of them in a place of concealment hard by, and of these three were brought and immediately launched. The king, the interpreter, Dick, and myself, with two strong paddlers, got into one, and such of the superior officers as did not care to wade, into the others. We paddled slowly over and reached the opposite shore in safety. Meanwhile the main body had been pouring across with such speed as is possible only to savages, and in an incredibly short period of time our force formed on the enemy's territory without the loss of a man. Starting at once, with scouts in advance, we proceed by forced march for, perhaps, twelve or fifteen miles, then halted for a brief rest, a circumstance that mightily pleased Dick and me, for we were puffing and wheezing like broken-winded nags.

"Well, lad," said Dick to me presently, as the king moved off among his men, "we're getting back to our old quarters in a way we didn't expect. I said we might get the bead on that snipe yet" (meaning Fitzroy), "and jest as sure's we're a sittin' here he's a goner if I ever clap eye on him."

"You surely wouldn't commit murder, Dick," I said laughing.

"Killin' ain't always murderin'," responded Dick grimly. "The hangman ain't counted a murderer though he does do a bit o' killin' now and again."

"Ah! but he has a warrant for his work," I said.

"It ain't always jest handy to get a warrant," said Dick slowly; "and where ye're sartin a little imp deserves death it don't transgress no moral law, to my mind, jest to be jedge, jury, and hangman all at once. Saves time and needless formalities."

"I think it's likely he'll keep out of range," I said.

"He may try without bein' able," returned Dick. "It's kind o' onsartin jest how this business is goin' to turn out."

"In that case Ali Kubla and his men are just as likely to have a crack at us as we at them," I said.

"No funkun', lad," returned Dick quietly; "we'll lay low anyway."

With that the king returned, and the order to advance was immediately given.

The moon had by this time disappeared, so that being in total darkness, and in a strange country the

marching was so difficult that after a disordered attempt to get forward we were obliged to halt for the dawn. We had not long to wait, for presently the eastern sky began to glimmer, and we were on the move again. We had not marched long when our scouts came running back with the intelligence that they had seen a small party of the enemy, who had immediately scampered off as if to give the alarm. The king knit his brows.

“We cannot take them by surprise, but must fight in pitched battle,” he said. Then the order was given to press forward more swiftly than ever.

It was now rapidly getting clear, but owing to the fact of our being in a slight hollow our view was not extensive. But we were not without intelligence, for a second party of scouts came back to tell us that they had sighted Osweego, from which clouds of warriors were issuing. Again the pace was quickened, and the march was no longer a walk but a run. When we rose to higher ground the sun was well above the horizon, and we could distinctly see long black columns pouring out of Osweego to a parade ground on the right, where they were evidently forming up. At sight of this we put on another spurt to obviate all chance of being driven back into the hollow. Then selecting our ground the troops were halted, and each man ate a hasty meal from the little store in his girdle. That done the army was put in battle array; and the vast gathering, here a hedge

and there a clump of spears, was a spectacle at once picturesque and imposing.

Once more the king went among his men to encourage them.

"Dick," I said, looking away at Koompupa's swelling host, "they're stronger than we are, they're fresh and on their own ground. D'ye think we'll come out alive?"

"It's likely to be a tough tussle," said Dick slowly. "But as long as them niggers ain't afeared white men ain't goin' to funk."

This closed my mouth, and whatever reflections I had afterwards I kept to myself.

We had not been long in this situation when Koompupa's army began to move towards us, a fact from which we inferred that he had either anticipated an invasion or was himself contemplating one. Our men eyed the advancing squares without a murmur or movement; indeed the silence was sepulchral and oppressive. The enemy advanced without any signs of haste or excitement to within less than half a mile of us, then deployed into fighting order by throwing out wings to right and left. The dispositions for the combat made, the entire force halted. Then we could distinguish Koompupa walking along his lines, and presently a messenger approached us bearing a flag of truce.

"What is thy message?" said Humanna, stepping out to meet him when he came up.



"The great king, Koompupa, the destroyer of his enemies and the terror of the world, is pleased to send word by me, his messenger, that if thou and thy army desire not to become carrion ye shall present him with five hundred oxen, and retire immediately across the big river. And though he hath just cause to kill you all, yet will he mercifully let you depart in peace, only retaining your commanders till the oxen be sent."

"Tell thy master, Koompupa," answered Humanna proudly, "that in place of presenting him with an offering of oxen, I require that from him which he hath already stolen. As for his boast, I and my warriors are ready to meet him. We may die, but we will not retire. And now haste thee away, for the sun climbeth the sky and there is much to be done."

No sooner had the messenger communicated this answer, than the enemy began to move slowly forward. For a moment our men watched the long advancing lines in silence, then at a given signal, but still without a sound, went on to meet the foe. Humanna had expressed the determination to head the charge himself, but his purpose being deprecated by those about him, he consented to remain with the reserve, nothing to the regret of Dick and myself, who had no ambition to be speared in the first go off. Slowly and steadily the two hosts advanced till within 200 yards of each other, when our men made a momentary halt as if wavering, then sudden as lightning wheeled and dashed at the left wing of the enemy with a tremen-

dous yell. I did not see the shock, for in the excitement I closed my eyes, and when I opened them our men had driven their opponents back, and were pressing gallantly forward over a layer of dead bodies. But in a little, the centre and right wing of the enemy closing compactly up, our force was checked, and for an instant even slightly borne back. In the tumult nothing could be clearly distinguished; for the two armies, fighting at close quarters and more or less mixed, presented the appearance of a seething, swinging sea, now heaving this way, now that, as the advantage momentarily changed from one party to the other. While the battle was proceeding in this desperate uncertain manner, suddenly a volley of musketry rolled out, and our men surprised, and perhaps a little frightened as well, gave way a bit. Rallying quickly, however, they stormed bravely home again, but another sharp discharge of musketry coming upon them, and almost simultaneously a frantic onslaught of the concentrated force of the enemy, they were hurled back as by an avalanche. A scene of terrific confusion ensued. Our men still fought like tigers, but without order, and therefore without effect. The Koompupas, on the other hand, had maintained their order, and were hurling themselves in solid phalanxes into our broken lines with fearful havoc. The king, watching intently but with perfect composure, seeing that his men wanted support and confidence, ordered the reserve to prepare for action. Then addressing Dick and me through his interpreter,

asked if we would join the assault. Beside myself with excitement, I answered quickly in the affirmative, and the next minute we and our column were rushing headlong at the foe. We crashed against his right flank, Dick and I gallantly discharging our pieces, and then, as Dick phrased it, wading in with the butt-ends of our muskets.

It would be impossible for me to describe minutely what took place after that, for a man cannot be a combatant and a spectator at the same time. I can speak only of what took place about myself. And the first thing that struck me after I had recovered from the initial shock was the titanic fighting of Dick. I saw him first mowing out a passage as if his weapon were a scythe instead of a gun, then I lost sight of him and thought he had been killed, but presently saw him again cutting his way back with the musket in one hand and a spear in the other, doing double execution, and literally running blood, very obviously not his own. The enemy, thinking him, I suppose, a trifle gorier than became an inoffensive man, a party of a dozen or so made a determined rush at him, but the king coming to his assistance deftly speared two of them; I somehow or other managed to get rid of two more, and Dick himself, being doubly armed and a very demon to boot, brought down other three, whereupon the rest turned their attention elsewhere.

For a while after this we fought side by side, both Dick and the king working extraordinary havoc, and

I also doing my best to defend myself, and crack an opponent's skull as the opportunity arose.

Throughout the fight we had heard the occasional rattle of musketry, though we had not been able to catch a glimpse of those who were firing; but presently Dick sang out in vigorous Yankee, "See the darned snipes!" and, looking ahead into the struggling mass of men, sure enough there I espied Koompupa, and beside him Ali Kubla and his men, with their guns aloft waiting for a chance to shoot. Fitzroy, however, was not to be seen, a circumstance in no way surprising considering his partiality for an unbroken skin.

"We must get in there," sang out Dick again; and making a sign to the king to concentrate his men, he began to cut his way in. He had thrown the spear away as an unhandy weapon, and using only his gun, firmly grasped by the muzzle in both hands, he slashed on, shattering spears and heads with herculean force and perfect impartiality. The king, calling on those about him to follow, rushed gallantly after Dick, and I did my best to keep them in sight. The passage was fiercely disputed, and we had to fight our way inch by inch, but we somehow managed to make way slowly. We had not to go the whole distance, for Koompupa and Ali Kubla seeing us began to press towards us, in hopes, no doubt, of killing us at a blow, and thus ending the battle. When we got to within a few feet of them Ali Kubla made a deadly lunge at Dick with a cutlass, but Dick, dexterously parrying the blow,

brought his musket down on Ali's head with a force that splintered the skull, and with a great groan the Arab reeled and fell dead.

By this time Humanna was up and engaging Koompupa. For a while they parried with their spears, but being too much pressed behind by their eager adherents, rushed in and closed with daggers. For a moment neither did any very effective work, and Koompupa, maddened by the delay, clutched his antagonist round the neck and brought him to his knees. Then the pressure from the rear increasing, the two kings rolled among the feet of the fighters grappling in deadly embrace. Over and over they turned in a scene of noise and confusion and blood that may be faintly conceivable, but is utterly indescribable. At length Koompupa had the advantage, and was just on the point of plunging his dagger into his opponent's heart, when Dick, suddenly swinging round from a little by-play in which he had been engaged behind, brought his devastating musket down on Koompupa's skull, and the contest was ended.

"I reckon that'll kind o' shake the plumes out'en yer head anyway," said Dick grimly. The effect was like magic. The Koompupas, terror-stricken at seeing their monarch dead, raised a howl of consternation which was prolonged along the whole line; and our men taking fresh courage leaped in among them with triumphant yells, and speared them almost like a defenceless herd of cattle. After that the contest was not so

much a battle as a great massacre. The Koompupas, indeed, made a feeble stand, but only to suffer enhanced punishment; and after a few minutes raised another dismal howl, broke, and fled, throwing away their arms as they ran—and the battle was won. Our men, wrought up to an almost delirious pitch of exultation, pursued the routed host, and I believe as many fell in the chase as in battle.

When we had run some distance—for Dick and I couldn't help joining in the pursuit, though I don't think we did any damage—I fancied I caught sight of civilized coat-tails streaming in the wind; and looking more keenly had little difficulty in making out they belonged to our quondam friend, Fitzroy. I called out to Dick, and we both had a flying shot at him, but either our nerves suffered from excitement or he was beyond range for we produced no effect, except if possible to make him run faster.

“Never mind,” said Dick; “we'll have him yet,” and we continued the chase.

It is needless to describe in detail all that followed. When we entered Osweego the proceedings resembled nothing but a rat hunt. The fugitives in their own city, hiding in every hole and corner that promised shelter, were probed out and speared without compunction. It was not an entertainment calculated to give one an appetite, but, as Humanna explained, it was inevitable under the circumstances, and we could but acquiesce. By and by we reached the royal hut, and



Dick and I, naturally curious to see our old quarters, looked in. Just as we passed across the threshold a piercing squeal rose from a corner where one of our warriors was poking with his spear. The next instant Fitzroy crept out still screaming, and seeing me ran forward and fell at my feet imploring mercy.

"I saved your life!" he cried piteously, clasping my knees; "oh, save mine now. Keep them from killing me. Be merciful, Lochiel, as you hope for mercy. Oh, save me! save me!"

As I looked down upon the miserable, cringing wretch I hardly know whether pity or contempt was uppermost. After all we had suffered through his wickedness it was not, perhaps, in human nature to view him with kindly feelings; and yet his misery was so acute that it might have touched the heart of a hangman.

"For the love of heaven, save me!" he cried, again clutching me tighter as Dick advanced with a set face. "Don't let him get me; he'll murder me."

But the strong hands were upon him, and he was jerked off shrieking like a terrified child.

"Old friends travel far who never meet again to settle scores, don't they?" said Dick, tightening his grip.

"Don't kill me, whatever you do," pleaded the cowering Fitzroy.

"Don't kill ye—eh?" returned Dick grimly. "Seems ez ye don't care yerself for the sauce ye serve out to

others. Ye could massacre a whole ship's crew, and then have the meanness to go back on them ez saved yer life and set a bloodhound like Koompupa on their track. I have thought that killin's too good for the like of you. I'm a man of peace, but I'm a man of my word as well, and onfortunately for you I have vowed a vow."

"Oh! for the love of God don't kill me, don't kill me!" screamed Fitzroy, rolling in the dust and licking Dick's feet.

"Ye've got ten minutes," returned Dick with increased grimness; "ye'll better make use of them."

"You'll get hanged if you lay a finger on me!" cried the frantic man on the ground.

"I guess we'll take risks," answered Dick. "Ye've got ten minutes, I say. Are ye minded to repent?"

Fitzroy wept, implored, threatened, crouched into a ball like a whipped cur, and stretched himself on the ground, rubbing his face in the dust. Never had I seen anything so abject, so utterly bereft of all the qualities of manhood.

Dick stood silently and grimly until the ten minutes had passed; then he made a sign to the warriors who stood round, and instantly Fitzroy was seized and dragged out screaming in mortal terror. In less than five minutes his head was brought back on a spear; and his crimes were expiated.

Subsequently the heads of Koompupa and Ali Kubla were secured and carried off as trophies in the same

way, but through my intervention the body of Ned Freely was allowed to lie as he had fallen in the fight. Having sacked the town and freed some slaves, we fired the place and returned to Zanaro with a gigantic herd of cattle; though, alas! with little more than half the troops that had gone forth to battle.





## CHAPTER XXI.

### FORTUNE.

THE victory was celebrated with all the pomp and ceremony that the genius of the Manuha nation—wondrously fertile in striking inventions—could devise; but neither Dick nor myself took any active part in the proceedings, I refraining because I was dead exhausted after so much arduous marching and fighting, and Dick because a few flesh wounds, to which he had given no heed in the fray or on the homeward march, were getting troublesome now that he had cooled down. However, when the festivities were at their height the king pressed us very urgently to go out just for a few minutes, alleging that the people were so eager to have a glimpse of the white warriors who had brought triumph to the Manuha arms, that if we refused they would assuredly press round and perhaps bear down our frail refuge, and smother us. To obviate any such awkward contingency we at length consented to be lionized, whereupon the king, as a very especial mark of royal favour, took us each by the hand, as an operatic manager might take a prima

donna, and led us forward to where we could be exhibited to most advantage. Before coming for us he had made an oration, in which he had dilated with fine poetic effect on our unequalled valour in battle, dwelling with particular gusto, the interpreter informed us, on our singular and effective manner of using muskets. Dick, for having saved the orator's life, had a special blast in the pæan; but I had ample justice also, my merits and achievements being such that, when they were impartially recited to me afterwards, I felt myself perfectly entitled to rank in history beside that ancient fighter who did such brilliant and memorable execution with the jaw-bone of an ass.

These Homeric descriptions, working on an audience naturally susceptible and imaginative, produced so high a degree of enthusiasm, that on our appearing a perfect thunder-storm of acclamation burst upon our ears. I could not help contrasting it with the greeting of horror with which we had been received on the morning of the earthquake; but the accidental tempers the admiration of savages precisely as it does that of civilized peoples.

We strove to bear the honours thus thrust upon us with Christian meekness, bowing very low to indicate our unworthiness, and hastening back to obscurity as fast as was becoming or permissible. But though our modesty constrained us to retire, we were by no means insensible to the charms of our new-born greatness.

There is something so strangely intoxicating in the applause of one's fellow-men, even when they happen to be savages, that the cordial warms, to a quite exceptional degree, the cockles of the vain human heart. After that I felt little fatigue, nor do I think Dick felt any great pains from his wounds. We fell to chatting vigorously about our exploits; and for a time at least the deeds of Achilles did not seem absolutely unmatchable.

Some hours later, when the feasting and dancing were nearly over, the king, with his interpreter, again sought us out, with a request to be informed what he could do to show his appreciation of the distinguished services we had rendered. Whatever we might desire he was ready to grant, provided it were in his power. I immediately thought of the gold, which recent excitements had banished from my mind, and by the light that leaped into Dick's face, and the peculiarly expressive glance he shot at me, I understood what was uppermost with him also; so after a polite preface of thanks we told the king of our discovery, intimating, since he was pleased to be gracious, that the wish closest to our hearts was to get some of the precious ore to a point on the coast whence we could take shipping to England.

"I have spoken," said Humanna with the manly and benignant bearing which generally distinguished him; "and though it grieveth me sorely to hear it lieth in your hearts to return to your own country,



which is so many moons<sup>1</sup> distant that I shall never behold you more, yet will I do according to all you wish."

At this Dick and I could scarce contain our joy, and were about to express our gratitude when the king went on.

"What is it that a man would not give for his life? or what is dearer to a king than his kingdom and the triumph of his people? Ye have saved my life and brought victory to my arms, for had I fallen my children should have been as men without feet or hands, a prey to the spoiler. Surely it is meet that I recompense you according to your heart's desire. Make your preparations, and the aid ye seek shall not be wanting."

It may be imagined we lost little time in proceeding with our arrangements. First we made a dozen stout boxes, some eighteen inches by twelve and about ten inches deep, which we had conveyed without delay to the sunken city. There they were packed full of shining gold, and, having been securely fastened with iron clamps, were carried back to Zanaro and deposited in the royal hut, pending our departure. What we took made no apparent diminution in the vein of ore, and for a time it sat sore on us to leave so much precious metal where it would not and could not be appreciated. But recalling the injunctions against avarice we strove to be content with what we could carry.

<sup>1</sup> Meaning that the journey thither would occupy so many moons or months.

It was marvellous how speedily we recuperated when we knew that all was in order but ourselves. I, indeed, had nothing to get over but fatigue; but Dick, whose wounds would have laid aside most men for a month, grew well as by magic, and in less than a week declared himself strong and ready for departure. It was late in the evening when he made this announcement, and on the morrow we were to start.

Sleep did not come to us that night, nor did we tarry abed in the morning. With the first streaks of dawn we were up, to find an escort of two hundred of the bravest warriors in the Manuha army, under command of our friend the interpreter, waiting for us. And the king came early to see us.

"Ye go, my white brothers," he said, "when I would have kept you; yet are ye not to blame, for the breath of our own country is ever sweet in the nostrils. These," pointing to the warriors who stood round our boxes, "will guide your steps to the ocean. Fear not, for they are brave and will fight. Ye go far to return, but know in your hearts ye are ever welcome to Zanaro. I have done."

With that the escort shouldered our boxes; and giving Humanna's hand a good civilized wring for the first time in his life, we were off, all Zanaro standing by to see us depart. Humanna stood for a while watching us, then suddenly waving his spear retired to his hut, and we saw him no more.

In twenty-five days from the time we left Zanaro

we safely reached the coast near the mouth of the Zambesi, where, dismissing our escort with a present of a musket for Humanna, we took shipping to Port Elizabeth and thence to England, having before we sailed decked ourselves out in brand new suits of colonial clothes.

On reaching London we immediately called on a broker, through whom we sold the contents of our boxes; far below their value, I make little doubt, but realizing by the sale what seemed to us to be a very handsome fortune. Dick purchased a banker's draft on New York for most of his share, and I on Glasgow for most of mine. Then having spent a few days in sight-seeing about town we went to Liverpool, where I saw Dick installed in one of the best state-rooms on board of a Cunarder. There we sat for about an hour looking at each other in silence. When at length, at the sound of a gong, I rose to take my leave, Dick followed me on deck, and at the final tug there was an expressive huskiness in his voice as he blurted out, "God bless ye, lad; God bless ye," wringing my hand the while till he almost crushed the bones in my fingers. I felt a lump in my throat, and hurried away lest the loungers looking on should laugh at me.

That night I went to Glasgow, where I wandered about all next day and evening looking at the exteriors of my old haunts. Not one of my old companions did I see, nor did I as much as catch a glimpse of my friend the bailie, though he was pretty constantly in

my thoughts. At sight of the University Captain Maupercieu, alias Donaldson, sometime student there, came to my mind, and I wondered where, and at what, he and his wild crew were at that moment engaged. Most likely at nothing that would win approval inside those venerable walls.

Early next morning I started for the Highlands, where I arrived in the evening, and was welcomed as one risen from the grave. And so on the threshold of another life, with its new hopes and fresh possibilities, let me grasp the adventurous reader by the hand, and wish him a comrade's heartiest farewell.

THE END.





